

# Aide-de-Camp's Library



Rashtrapati Bhavan  
New Delhi

Accn. No. 503

Call No. IX (6) - R

\_\_\_\_\_





THIS WAS MY WORLD







MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA · MADRAS  
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO  
DALLAS · ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
OF CANADA, LIMITED  
TORONTO



*Camera portrait ]*

*[17 0 11 11]*

MARGARET HAIG, VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA, NOVEMBER, 1932.

# THIS WAS MY WORLD

BY

THE VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1933

**COPYRIGHT**

**PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN**

## INTRODUCTION

I CAME to write this book by accident. A few years ago my old House-mistress, Miss Sandys, then over eighty years of age, became seriously ill. It was impossible not to realise that the end was near. As had many of her House, I had remained on intimate terms with her all my life. Our friendship had grown with the years. Thinking of her a good deal, I had a sudden strong desire to write down something of what she had meant to us in our school days, and of what I could remember of that long-ago time passed under her influence. My school years, which were happy and very formative, stand out vividly in my recollection—more vividly, I think, than they do in the minds of most people.

I began to write one night, when I could not sleep, in the train between Paris and Geneva. All the rest of those summer holidays I went on writing. At the end I had written all the school section. I had it in my mind to publish some parts of it anonymously in *Time and Tide*, but before doing so I sent one or two of the sketches to Miss Sandys for approval. She approved, but she wrote: "Everyone will know the school you represent—no other school has old abbey walls. I think these articles are a little too personal for *Time and Tide*; they would be better published by themselves. . . ."

That barred *Time and Tide*, but the stuff was written, and having written it I wanted to publish it. Also, when I had set these things down I had realised that they did not stand complete in themselves; they linked on to all sorts of other things which happened before or afterwards. The plan came into my mind of making some picture of those scenes

and people of my early life which remained still so vividly in my recollection that they seemed to ask to be put on to paper. Gradually, I do not quite know how, the idea of making a whole book grew.

In looking back I have found that one's far past life makes a kind of pattern, and that certain people and incidents and events shine out like scraps of landscape from behind a rolling mist. It is those scenes that I have tried to paint. Where the mist lies thick I have not, for the most part, tried to dissolve it. So my most vivid recollections are neither linked together nor even all, save in so far that it is I who remember them, necessarily directly related to me. They are like single beads; there is very little thread, or at least if there is one it escapes me.\*

A friend who read the book in type suggested that part of the thread lay in the gradual development by the force of somewhat unusual circumstances of the absent-minded, dreamy, shy, unusually diffident child, always looking for first causes and completely unpractical, into the comparatively practical and moderately self-confident woman of thirty. But it certainly never occurred to me as I wrote that

\* The only exception I have made to the rule of straying as my fancy led me has been that here and there, at the bidding of friends who read this book in typescript and whose judgment I valued, I have, to make the narrative plainer and more comprehensible, added in sections which I would not myself have thought of setting down. I should not of myself, for example, have thought of mentioning my marriage. One's marriage seems to me a purely private matter, unsuitable for discussion in print. But it was pointed out to me that if I omitted reference to it I should run the risk of laying what was in fact the plain and simple story of a misfit—a misfit likely enough to happen under the social conditions of pre-war days, when most protected girls married before they knew what they themselves were really like, leave alone their future husbands—open to misinterpretation. I therefore interpolated some short account of it.

I was showing that. Nor am I altogether sure about that diffidence.

I do think, however, that I may have shown something of the complexity of the upbringing and the difficulties of the early grown-up years of an Edwardian young woman brought up in a transitional period (but one which differed from the world of to-day in that it was largely unconscious that it was transitional), with one foot in the Victorian epoch and the other in the modern world, and expected to adapt herself to being neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring.

My experience is perhaps in one sense typical of that of many women of my generation who, born into a Victorian world, passed into an Edwardian and thence, through the kaleidoscope of the war, into the Neo-Georgian one, adapting as best they could as they went along. And seeing that most certainly, in fact if not in name, all three periods are still actively with us to-day, such experience is possibly worth our consideration.

I think also that I may have shown something of the effect of unusual circumstances on a normal person. Many autobiographies are written by people who have succeeded in their particular profession, or rather vocation, because they have followed it regardless of obstacle: they have had from the start one dominant idea only. In so far as this is so, such records, whilst interesting in themselves and magnificent as examples, have little to tell us about the average human being.

When, for example, one reads Dame Ethel Smyth's "Impressions that Remained," one realises that she never swerved for one instant in her determination. Music it was from the time she was a tiny tot. And when, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, she decided and announced her deter-



mination to go to Leipzig to study music, and (that was in the eighteen-seventies, when young ladies didn't do such things) her father retorted, "I would sooner see you under the sod," she writes :

"I not only unfurled the red flag, but determined to make life at home so intolerable that they would have to let me go for their own sakes. . . . In those days no decent girls travelled alone, third class and omnibuses were things unheard of in our world, and I had no money; but I would slip away across the fields to Farnborough Station, travel third to London and proceed by omnibus to any concert I fancied. The money difficulty was met by borrowing five shillings from tradesmen we dealt with on the Green, or the postman, 'to be put down to the General.' In order to be close to Joachim and his companions I would stand for hours in the queue at St. James's Hall. . . . My financial arrangements with the tradesmen came out, of course, as they were meant to, and to my father's ragings I stubbornly replied : 'You won't let me go to Leipzig, so of course I have to go to London to hear music.' . . . Towards the end I struck altogether, refused to go to church . . . refused to speak to anyone, and one day my father's boot all but penetrated a panel of my locked bedroom door. . . . There was nothing for it but to capitulate . . . and finally, on July 26th, 1877 . . . I was packed off, on trial and in deep disgrace, but too madly happy to mind about that, to the haven of my seven years' longing."

Or take, for another quite recent example, Miss Joan Procter, the zoologist, who died about eighteen months ago at the early age of thirty-four. Her obituary notice, published in *The Times* for September 21st, 1931, describes how from the time she was still in the nursery she was following her natural bent.

"As a small child she had rejected dolls for a large green Dalmatian lizard, which travelled everywhere with her and sat at table beside her at meals. While still a small schoolgirl she had gone to Dr. G. A. Boulenger, Keeper of Reptiles and Fishes at the British Museum, to ask him some question about the structure of a reptile, and he, recognising that she was a naturalist

by disposition, had helped and encouraged her and continued to take an interest in her. In 1917 . . . Dr. Boulenger invited her to assist him at the Museum."

The *Manchester Guardian* for the same date continues the story:

"She worked at the South Kensington Museum under Dr. G. A. Boulenger from 1917 to 1920, and on his retirement took his place in charge of the reptile department until 1923. At that time employment of women was not in favour at the Museum, and when it was proposed to put over her a young man from Cambridge Miss Procter accepted an appointment under the Zoological Society of London, to whose scientific proceedings she had already contributed some notable memoirs. . . . She . . . helped greatly in the plans for Whipsnade, and created the new reptile house, giving the architect the general plan, designing the details of the accommodation for reptiles and batrachians on entirely new lines."

Here were people who could no other.

When we read the lives of any of the great artists, great saints, great scientists, they all give us the same feeling. We realise that these are people set apart, marked at birth for one thing and one only, for something not far distant from the special fate that later becomes their lot—people who wherever, whenever, however they had been born must, if they had been heard of at all, somehow have achieved something pretty close to the kind of self-expression they did achieve. Circumstances might indeed so have engulfed them that the world had never heard of them, but scarcely anything short of physical force could, one feels, have prevented them from spending their lives in doing, whether it was known and recognised or no, much the kind of work they did do. These are abnormal people. One cannot judge from them to ordinary folk—one cannot use the same measure of comparison.

The early lives of such people as Florence Nightingale, or even, to take some more modern instances, Ellen Wilkinson or Margaret Bondfield, give us in their several spheres something of the same effect. (I have, of course, deliberately selected women for the purposes of this comparison.) These people had no help; they fought free in the face of apparently insuperable difficulties, with a tenacity of purpose that is almost unimaginable. One realises that, although they were not necessarily hall-marked for one particular vocation, they were nevertheless endowed with so much force of character that they were almost certain to push through to the light they needed, that they insisted on making their way in spite of obstacles that might well have seemed insurmountable, in the face of an environment whose hostility must have daunted any ordinary person, must have persuaded her into supposing that there was no way out.

I belonged to none of these categories. I doubt, I very much doubt, whether if I had been born say twenty years earlier, or had a less understanding family or less amazingly modern-minded father, I should ever have done anything outside the home at all. Or even so much as known that it was possible to get out of the prison in which I found myself. I know that I should have been unhappy, but I doubt if I should have known why I was unhappy. These people had to get out or perish. I should not have perished. I should merely have lived uncomfortably—uncomfortably for myself and notably uncomfortably for other people.

My autobiography is the autobiography of a normal person. Vigorous certainly, with aspirations, of course—most normal people have these—but aspirations not so strong

but what the subduing effect of environment, reinforced by the strong tide of youth towards mating and reproduction, could choke them all down, so that for years they amounted to little more than a subconscious dissatisfaction, an unappeased hunger and unsatisfied self-respect, and might, had circumstances been very little different, have amounted never to anything more than that.

I was set free by chance. The child who had wanted to be a Prime Minister, a great writer—and the mother of at least twelve children—and who had chosen and insisted upon school and college; the girl who had been part-moulded into the correct semi-Victorian shape, accepting all the limitations of being a woman and hoping only for marriage and a big family; the young woman who had seen the flare of liberation in the militant suffrage movement; eventually became by the force of circumstances the one thing that had never entered her head to be—a business woman. Thousands must have known all that I have known save that chance of being set free.

If I had had five or six children how much difference would it have made? Would it have been enough? Would it have contented me, every part of me? Would that nagging, unsatisfied self-respect have been assuaged? I wanted children more consciously than many women do, and it would have made a big difference—of that I make no doubt. But I do not think (and I have thought about it a good deal) that for me at least it would have made anything like all the difference. I know that it would not have been enough to make me happy. If I had been a working woman, had to do the whole job myself . . . perhaps . . . but even then I doubt it. . . . Certainly, with nurses and governesses and good schools taking a large part of the expert side of the business off my hands and

doing it better than I could hope to do it myself, I am quite sure it would not have made me content. It has never been enough for me that my personal emotions should go full-fed. I have always wanted something more than that, and wanted it more than I wanted that—much though that means.

There is something else, upon which I have already touched, about which I should perhaps say a word or two more here. This book, which purports to be about myself, wanders at times, and sometimes for long at a time, into fields which do not appear to have anything to do with me. That is only natural. I have written not only of what I have seen with the eyes of the flesh, but also of what I have seen with the eyes of the mind, and of the things which I have pondered in my heart. The result is in fact a far more complete picture of the days of my youth than a picture which showed only myself could be.

It was, I think, Mr. Richard Hughes, the author of "High Wind in Jamaica," who once said that every novel is an autobiography. This book is not a novel: it is emphatically an autobiography—but if it is to be that it cannot concern itself solely with the actual happenings of my own life. For just as when a man purports to write fiction he in fact tells those who have ears to hear more about himself than anyone else, so if one is to write about oneself one must continually go far afield. If I turn the light on to memories of my past and let them play before it as they choose, obviously I shall bulk more largely in the picture than anything else, but, equally obviously, I shall not be the only thing I shall find there. I do not apologise for devoting two chapters of a book ostensibly concerning myself to an account of my father's life—it is, after all, a small

proportion. . . . Of all the factors that go to make people, their parents are the most important. No one who searched honestly through the haul of fish caught in the nets of memory could fail to find that, for good or evil—and I have been lucky—they bulked large.

One thing I realised early. It would be impossible to attempt to write anything about quite recent years. It is not that they have not been interesting—on the contrary, I have found so far that life seems to become more and more fascinating, more and more full and interesting the older one grows—but that they have not yet arranged themselves into any pattern. They are still all tangled up. If I delved into them I should, it seems, be dipping at random, not picking out the already patterned scenes from the surrounding mist. Also I have found, even in what I have written, that the nearer I have got to the present day the more impossible it has become to tell anything but the most superficial truth. That difficulty would be even greater were one to come any nearer to one's present self. The me of twenty years ago is so little me that I can talk of that creature with freedom. The me of even ten years ago is so much me that I find it difficult to say a word about her.



# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION - - - - -	PAGE v
------------------------	-----------

## PART I

### A SEMI-VICTORIAN WORLD

CHAPTER		
I. CHILDHOOD - - - - -		3
II. FATHER, MOTHER AND FAMILY - - - - -		13
III. A MAIDEN AUNT - - - - -		28
IV. EARLY ADOLESCENCE - - - - -		35
V. A SCRAP BOOK OF SCHOOL MEMORIES - - - - -		42
VI. OUR HOUSE-MISTRESS - - - - -		58
VII. CONFIRMATION - - - - -		68
VIII. LEAVING SCHOOL AND COMING OUT - - - - -		76
IX. HOME, COLLEGE AND MARRIAGE - - - - -		95

## PART II

### A CHANGING WORLD

X. ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT - - - - -	117
XI. STREET CORNER MEETINGS AND CABINET MINISTERS - - - - -	135
XII. PRISON - - - - -	150

## PART III

### MY FATHER'S WORLD

XIII. IN SOME SENSE TRAGEDY - - - - -	173
XIV. THE LAST YEARS - - - - -	199
XV. A WOMAN IN BUSINESS - - - - -	217

## PART IV

### THE WAR—AND AFTER

XVI. MAY 7TH, 1915 - - - - -	239
XVII. LONDON IN WAR-TIME - - - - -	261
XVIII. THE PEACE RIVER - - - - -	276
XIX. THE FUTURE - - - - -	293





## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MARGARET HAIG, VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA, NOVEMBER, 1932					<i>Frontispiece</i>
				FACING PAGE	
MARGARET HAIG THOMAS, AGED TWO	-	-	-	-	14
MARGARET HAIG THOMAS, AGED TWENTY	-	-	-	-	86
VISCOUNT RHONDDA	-	-	-	-	174
LLANWERN	-	-	-	-	212
SYBIL, VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA	-	-	-	-	270



PART I  
A SEMI-VICTORIAN WORLD



CHAPTER I  
CHILDHOOD

When from the hills of Gwent I saw the earth  
Burned into two by Severn's silver flood :

Can I forget the sweet days that have been,  
The villages so green I have been in;  
Llantarnam, Magor, Malpas, and Llanwern,  
Liswery, old Caerleon, and Alteryyn?

W. H. DAVIES.

THE first scent I can remember was the smell of gorse. But it cannot really have been the first I knew, for I recollect that it reminded me of oatmeal. I must have been about three years old. Gingerly I picked the flowers off the prickly bush and held them tight crumpled in my hot hand, opening it every minute to sniff at them. I can remember the smell to this day and the look of the copse on the sunny Radnorshire hillside where the gorse grew.

Every summer we used to go up to Pen Ithon in Radnorshire, where my mother's father and mother, George Augustus and Anne Eliza Haig, lived, and spend six perfect weeks. Pen Ithon stood eleven miles from its nearest market town and railway station, up among the moors and hills of the Plynlimmon range. In the spring, when all the moors were covered with the little long-tailed Welsh sheep and their lambs baa-ing to each other, and the curlews were calling and the days were long and light, it was delicious. One Easter comes back to my mind when the carrion crows had been giving trouble with the young lambs, and we were asked to rout them out. I used to be sent to the tops of the

tallest fir trees after their nests by an older cousin with a tendency to giddiness. I can still remember the anxious thrill of climbing cautiously down—he shouting directions as I came—with a couple of partly set eggs in my mouth. I must have been a good deal older then—well into my 'teens.

But in high summer Pen Ithon was better still. In August the heather and the gorse bloomed there together (on the Welsh hills and moors the gorse and heather, contrary to their habits in other places, come into full bloom at the same time. That makes August very full of colour). The wild pansies and the bluebells were all out, the hills were warm in the sun. It was then that most of my grandparents' nine surviving children, bringing with them their respective families, came to visit them.

For children the place was heaven. All day long we played games, climbed trees, bathed in the rocky pools of the brown stream that ran through the valley below the house, rode ponies over the moors. Iceland ponies, they mostly were. My grandfather had once imported two hundred of them from that island. The Iceland pony is a slow mover, more like a very small cart-horse than a pony, and warranted to take life placidly. The Welsh pony is a very different creature, but the small and timid were usually given Icelanders. There were always enough ponies to go round, not always enough saddles. The rule of eldest first was strictly adhered to, and since I was one of the youngest and also terrified of horses I sometimes came off badly. My elder cousins gave me, with some scorn, a quiet pony. That was no sacrifice—they preferred the unquiet ones themselves—but they were occasionally apt to expect me to ride either with a man's saddle or bare-backed; and only when I clung with all my might to the tall pommels

of the old-fashioned side-saddle did I feel at all safe—and not very, even then. So far as I was concerned the ponies were on the whole a cause of more anxiety than pleasure.

It was against the whole code of the family that anyone should show fear of anything. My mother did her best to hide it from herself, but I always felt that she regarded it as a secret disgrace that she alone of the family should have bred a daughter who was frightened of horses and water. I tried to comfort myself in my cowardice by reflecting that I was very little afraid of rock or tree climbing, but in my heart I remained convinced that I was one of the worst cowards the world had produced. I retained the conviction till I was over thirty. However, being frightened of the ponies did perhaps make them even more thrilling. And as for the water difficulty, that never arose in a very acute form at Pen Ithon. There was only room to take three strokes in the biggest of the pools of the brown stream, and then one usually banged one's hands against the rock at the shallow end. But one could slide down a steep waterfall into it and splash under as one landed, which was exciting for us, though death to the seats of our bathing gowns.

We all loved Pen Ithon, but it had one advantage for me over and above those it possessed for the others. I was an only child. At Pen Ithon for six weeks I mixed not merely with one child, carefully imported to keep me company, but with eight or ten others. That in itself was intoxicating joy.

Not that I did not like my own home in Monmouthshire down by the Severn. Llanwern too was an ideal place to spend one's childhood in. The park was full of great trees, elm and beech and lime—trees grow large in Monmouth-



shire. The old red-brick house built in Queen Anne days was square and comfortable. It was a pleasant, friendly house, full of sunshine. Up the front grew an enormous magnolia reaching to the low walled stone parapet that surrounded the roof. The gables had leaden paths leading round and about them, and slates over which one could climb and down which one could slide, though this latter habit had, so it appeared, a bad effect on the watertightness of the roof and was slightly discouraged by the authorities.

It is true that in winter, when we were alone, the great dark house felt rather eerie at night. And on Sunday evenings, especially in the late autumn when one could hear the church bells in the dusk across the fields, I was acutely miserable; evening church bells always cast me into depths of gloom. But in summer, when it was usually full to overflowing with my mother's relations, it seemed just the right size.

When a General Election came we used to go to stay at Ysgyborwen, my father's old home, which was in the centre of his constituency. All day long and every night there were meetings. After the evening meetings there was very often a torchlight procession, when the crowd took the horses out of our open carriage and dragged it round the town. Processions were thrilling things—sometimes almost too thrilling, as on the occasion when only prompt action on my father's part prevented our crowd from meeting that of one of the rival candidates, and a grand street row was narrowly averted. During the day I did lessons with my governess, but I used to be allowed to go to most of the evening meetings, and I thoroughly enjoyed them. The little hot, crowded chapel, the earnest-minded and long-winded chairman, usually a Nonconformist minister, the

enthusiasm, the hecklers, and watching my father answer them—it was all great fun.

So far as my father's speech went, that was a little monotonous, for he made the same speech do for each meeting, and one got to know it almost as well by heart as he did, but question-time always held promise of diversion and even of excitement. There was the evening, for instance, when he had been enlarging on the benefits to be obtained from Disestablishment. At the end of his speech a man at the back of the chapel got up. "Mr. Thomas has talked a great deal about the right to worship as one chooses," said he. "I should be interested to learn what place he himself attends on Sundays." Now, my father was a baptised member of the Church of England (emphasis on which point would have done him no good at all in that constituency), but he attended no place of worship whatsoever. My mother and I sat on thorns of anxiety. We had forgotten that he had, as it chanced, two or three times during the past couple of years strayed for a short while during a Sunday walk into the service held at a little Nonconformist chapel two or three miles from Llanwern. My father got to his feet. "I don't say," he replied, "that I am quite as regular an attendant at chapel as my friend on the right here," waving his hand genially in the direction of the usual Nonconformist minister in the chair, "but when I do go I attend a Baptist place of worship." Applause from a largely Baptist audience. Sighs of relief from my mother and myself.

I cannot have been more than seven when the idea of my making my first speech was mooted. I was in no wise alarmed. "What would you say to them?" asked my father. "I should tell them," I replied, "that one of my teeth fell out this morning." What actually happened,

however, was that I was made to learn off a sentence in Welsh (I said it so often that, although I now remember no word of Welsh, I can repeat it to this day). It meant "Please vote for Father, everybody." And at each meeting—very pleased with myself—I was put up to say it.

Another incident comes back to me. One polling day the family separated into two halves; my mother made a round of the polling booths in one part of the constituency, whilst my father and I in a big landau drove in another direction. Merthyr Boroughs was a large constituency, not quickly covered in the days of horse vehicles, and certain outlying portions were entirely surrounded by other constituencies. As we drove along, my father returning everyone's salute, his hat was never for more than a second on his head. Suddenly, after about a couple of hours of this, he, although the passers-by continued to recognise him, clamped his hat firmly down and, with a sigh of relief, sat back. "What's the matter?" said I. And he, with a grin: "We're outside the constituency."

\* \* \* \* \*

At bottom mine was a happy childhood. I had the things that matter most, a father and mother who were happy with each other and with me, and who could be trusted always to be just and to play fair with me in every way—who could be trusted to try to put my happiness and well-being even before the pleasure they took in me themselves. The feeling of security that that gives is, I think, the thing that matters most of all to a child, and makes a difference to it for all the rest of its life. I do not believe that the things which happen later ever hurt one in the same way, so long as nobody that counts ever fails one when one is a child.

Superficially I was perhaps a bit too lonely to be quite as

happy as a child can be. Always I longed for other children to play with. Every night when I went to bed I prayed for a little sister—who is for some reason mixed up in my memory of that time with the thought of a pale pink silk frock trimmed with Irish crochet lace. Whether I ever had a frock like that myself or whether it was merely that I thought that such a frock would be the height of beauty and therefore desired that the sister of my dreams should appear in it, I cannot say. But certainly the sister I longed for had something to do with the frock. I cannot remember that I ever prayed for a brother. I was a cautious child. I knew very well that my father had been disappointed when I was born, that I turned out to be a girl and not a boy. And though he was always careful to explain when conversation turned on this point that now he had got me he wouldn't dream of wanting to change me, I think I rather suspected that a brother who actually came might put my nose out of joint. A sister was safer—so for a sister I prayed. Failing the sister, who in spite of repeated and urgent prayers never did come, I pinned my hopes on marrying early and having a very large family to play with—twelve at least I wanted.

As a child I was shy beyond the usual degree. I remember once when I was taken to a garden party I cried without ceasing from the moment I arrived till the time I left—partly, no doubt, in protest at having been forced to go, but chiefly from shyness. My mother, who spartanly refused to curtail her visit, must have spent an uncommonly uncomfortable couple of hours strolling round the lawns, followed by a loudly sobbing child. I don't doubt that it had its effect on her next time she considered whether I should accompany her or no. I do not remember attending many such parties in my early youth. In fact, even after I grew

up, there came naturally enough to be a tendency to put the responsibility of junior hostess on to some other available young woman, whilst I would moon about silently and peacefully in the background, or even retire altogether with a book.

At some very early stage I learnt to protect myself when I was feeling shy by "playing stupid." I rather think I learnt it half deliberately. Some person I admired, or possibly a hero I had read about did it, and I thought it sounded a safe and a wise plan. The trick has been a curse to me all my life, for I have never quite succeeded in unlearning it. My mother, I think, did not worry over much about the shyness, which she regarded as a minor defect about which there was nothing to be done and which would presently pass of itself—but in fact it never did. About the things which she believed to be essential, however, no one could have been more careful or conscientious. I remember that once when she thought I had told a lie she was cast into the deepest gloom and anxiety for days. The occasion, which was a complicated one, had something to do with some pink sugar almonds. I had not in fact had any intention of telling a lie, the thing was some kind of misunderstanding, but seeing my mother's gloom I felt every bit as guilty as if I had.

I can only remember telling two lies during my childhood—and I admitted to them both within the hour. This sounds rather like George Washington, but I should think it was true of many a Victorian child, especially of the later era. Truth was regarded as terribly important; on the other hand, with the advent of the smaller family, parents had become indulgent. One was seldom, if ever, severely punished for one's misdeeds. So why not admit to them?

I was a greedy child, but in the eyes of the Haigs, who

were all fond of their food and never pretended not to be, this was no discredit to me, and was never held for a fault that needed correction, and it was amongst the Haigs that I spent all my early years. It was their standards which counted. "I wish I were a pig," I sighed once at the end of a specially enjoyable meal, "because then I could go on eating all the time." I remember that particular wish because, rather to my surprise (it seemed to me so obvious), it caused much amusement, but I should imagine that I had often wished it at other times without putting it into words. It was not till after I married that I discovered that there were people in the world who really thought it wrong to take a lively interest in one's food.

I was certainly also an innocent child. When, in answer to prayers made aloud at my mother's knee regularly all through the autumn, a beautiful wax doll arrived as a Christmas present, I gave the credit to Heaven, not to my own tact. And when the following Christmas I remarked that I did not intend to pray for a Christmas present this year, as I preferred that it should come as a surprise, I meant it in all good faith, though it was not so taken by a cynical group of elder cousins, and became, indeed, one of the stock family stories against me. My cousins inclined to the view that I had the kind of innocence that usually obtained good results, but in this instance at least, although I admit that it sounds incredible, they wronged me. I should have been deeply shocked at the idea of using my prayers for any other purpose than direct intercourse with the Almighty, and should have expected curses to rain down on my head had I done so.

Until I was thirteen I learnt what trifles I did learn from governesses, first French and later German, but at thirteen

I was sent to Notting Hill High School. It was my father who wanted this. I suppose he realised that there was no serious connection between the governesses and education. The German governess, however, remained, and conducted me every morning in a four-wheeler from our flat in Westminster to Notting Hill. When school was over she called for me and walked me back through the parks.

Two years later I went to St. Leonards School, St. Andrews. This was at my own wish. I had discovered that at St. Leonards girls were allowed to go out for walks by themselves without attendant mistresses. This spelt freedom, and it was for freedom that I thirsted. I went to my father and told him what I wanted to do. Would he help? He was at first a shade doubtful. He knew little of girls' boarding schools, but his sister Mary had been to one, and he thought she had learnt to be silly there. The girls, he understood, used to flirt with the boys at an army crammer's next door.

Now, the only two things in the world that I knew about St. Leonards were that it was by the sea and that one was allowed out alone there, but those two were enough for me. I knew in my bones that such things as he described could never happen at St. Leonards. This was *quite* a different kind of school, I explained to him; no one was ever silly there. I spoke with the assurance of complete conviction. My father—it was characteristic of him—took my word for it without hesitation. Within a couple of weeks my mother had been up to St. Leonards, seen the school and all the houses, fallen in love with Miss Sandys at sight, and accepted the offer of a vacancy in her house. And within two months I was there.

## CHAPTER II

### FATHER, MOTHER AND FAMILY

THE other day my mother unearthed out of some old drawer a copy of a document which I had filled in at the age of nine. It is entitled *Mes Confidences*. In those days I used to take in a weekly children's paper called *St. Nicholas*. The *abonnées* of *St. Nicholas* each chose a pseudonym which was printed in the paper—mine was Wild Rose—and whenever they fancied the pseudonym of another *abonnée* they arranged to exchange *Confidences* with them. If they found that their tastes and ages agreed, they would then strike up a correspondence. *St. Nicholas* supplied the little printed *cahiers* of *Confidences* in which were given the questions we each had to answer. I had doubtless intended to send the particular copy my mother had kept to some little girl somewhere in Europe (I chose my *confidantes* largely for the sake of the romantic places in which they lived, and had correspondents in Constantinople, Austria and a variety of other foreign parts), but for some reason it had never got sent. Really, I don't wonder that my mother kept it, for it is most flattering to her. For the rest, my views at the age of nine appear to have been all that was of the most orthodox, and on the whole I seem to have been thoroughly pleased with my fates. The affair was, I imagine, entirely my own composition so far as opinion and sentiment were concerned.

"*Quelle est votre principale espérance?*" inquired the *Confidences*. "*Aller au Ciel,*" replied I. To the query "*Quel écrivain préférez vous?*" I replied, "Charles Kingsley and



Walter Scott." I must, I imagine, have been but recently introduced to them. When the *cahier* continued by inquiring which was my favourite painter and which my favourite musician, I gave the name of my favourite aunt in reply to the first, and of my mother to the second. And when asked "*Quel est, selon vous, l'idéal du bonheur terrestre?*" I replied simply, "*Avoir une mère aussi bonne que la mienne.*"

I was devoted to my mother, as also to my father, although in those early pre-school years I saw a good deal less of him than I did of her. He was a delightful father when one did see him, however, and most useful when one wanted to extract treats from the authorities such as holidays or sitting up late. He was always the one to go to for these. My mother was more spartan, but he could manage her when as a child one couldn't. Characteristically, he approved much more of sitting up for dinner than he did of extra holidays, and was easier to persuade to help in that direction. His own theories about the upbringing of children were comparatively few, but original: they were, for the most part, placidly ignored by my mother. The chief ones which I remember were that a child should learn nothing till it was ten years old (my mother, however, had instituted a governess and had me taught to read at the more usual age of five), and that it should then be sent to the local Board School for some years. I can never make up my mind whether to be glad or sorry that this part of his programme was ignored.

I cannot remember, beyond a dim recollection that he and my mother together once put me in the corner when I was aged three, that he ever punished me in his life; his general policy was one of non-interference in what he looked upon as his wife's business. The truth was that he was not really much interested in the company of the very young. He



MARGARET HAIG THOMAS, AGED TWO.



found the infant stage rather dull. Adolescents, however, he actually enjoyed. Once they got into their teens and could talk intelligently and—perhaps still more important—listen intelligently on subjects that he found interesting, he liked their company enormously.

I must have been about eleven or twelve when he first “talked business” to me: that is, poured out a stream of description of some deal he was engaged on at the time, without any explanations—he hated explaining anything; it bored him. He walked up and down the room as he talked, turning his coins over in his pocket, and I, seated in the big armchair, listened palpitating with pride at being treated in so grown-up a fashion, but terrified of saying the wrong thing, and so showing that I was only understanding about one quarter of what he was saying, which I well knew would have instantly stopped the flood. On that occasion my mother was up in town ill, and there was no one else at home for him to talk to. He always talked business at home a great deal; he would retail every evening all that had interested him in the day’s events.

Our household was, as I have said, a very happy one. Really, looking back, it seems to me that if I have a fault to find with my parents as an educational force it is that they were too good, too just and too straight-dealing. In spite of all the discoveries of the new psychology, not enough consideration, it seems to me, has yet been given to the worldly disadvantages to be derived from good parents. So far as I can remember neither of my parents, in the whole course of my childhood, ever let me down, or gave me the feeling that I had been unfairly treated or that they had really considered their own interests whilst pretending to consider mine. It chanced that when I went to school my House-mistress was as single-minded as they were. I grew up under the impres-

sion that justice and fair dealing were the rule, and that such exceptions as occurred were only among the criminal classes. I expected people to play for their own hands, of course, but I expected them to play for them quite openly. The idea that they might really be playing for their own hands whilst pretending to me, and even to themselves, that they were playing for mine never entered my innocent head. The lessons that one learns later have to be learnt over and over again before they make a mark. For years (long after I ought to have known better) I kept on expecting, as a matter of course, justice and fair dealing from all sorts of people to whom neither was possible.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

My father and mother came from completely different environments, and in some ways they were as unlike as any two people could be, yet they had really a good deal in common, and they fitted together remarkably well.

My father came originally of small farmer stock on both sides of his family. His father's forebears had been farmers down in Monmouthshire near Magor, but his grandfather ran away from there. We never could discover, though we often used to search, which of the small white farms dotted about the low hills of that green-growing countryside he had come from. He came to Merthyr, where he began as a haulier and afterwards set up in business as a contractor, did well in a small way and passed on a little money and some education to his son Samuel Thomas, my grandfather, who was born in 1800. Samuel Thomas made a small fortune, lost most of it, and made a second and a bigger one as an old man, in the mining tide that swept into the Welsh valleys through the nineteenth century. He

married twice and had seventeen children, only five of whom lived to grow up.

My father, David Alfred Thomas (afterwards Lord Rhondda), was born at Ysgyborwen, during a stormy night on March 26, 1856. His father was down at the Ysgyborwen pit, about half a mile from the house, at the time, and one of the maids ran down to tell him of the new arrival. My grandfather, who was a taciturn old man—he was fifty-six at this time—and just then in the midst of a severe financial crisis, made only one comment: "Well, I see nothing for him but the workhouse." However, in point of fact my father went, not to the workhouse, but to a good school at Clifton and to Caius College, Cambridge, where he took his degree in Mathematics and incidentally met one of my mother's brothers who was up at the same time, and so, eventually, my mother. My grandfather, who valued education highly, had determined to give his sons a better one than he had had himself.

Unsociable in private life, taciturn, a trifle grim, a bit close-fisted, hating any form of show or ostentation, Samuel Thomas was a strong Nonconformist and disciplinarian, who gave to his household order and simplicity and stern religious observance. A man who was, as the saying goes, "master in his own house," he was more feared than loved, perhaps, but always respected, and undoubtedly interesting to talk to, shrewd, intelligent, with a good deal of dry humour. His second wife, Rachel, the mother of all his surviving children, was many years younger than he was—and as different as could be imagined. Sociable, generous, rather extravagant, affectionate, with a good deal of artistic instinct, she was friendly and popular with all her neighbours.

The two, as might be supposed, formed a not very well-assorted couple. My grandmother's extravagance infuriated

my grandfather, who had that puritan horror of waste not uncommon in the self-made man of the nineteenth century. He once went so far as to burn a new fur coat which she had bought without his permission and paid £60 for. My grandmother, however, showed a very proper spirit on this occasion; she spent another £60 on another new coat, and told him she would go on buying till he stopped burning, which he did immediately.

Samuel Thomas disliked his wife's sociable instincts, hated her attempts at show and ostentation. On one occasion he walked in wearing his oldest clothes (and legend has it that his old clothes were very old) to a smart evening party she was giving, and, without speaking to a soul, took a stool and sat down in front of the fire with his back to the whole gathering, which, under the influence of his gloomy figure, shortly broke up.

I never knew my grandfather, he died about the time my father left college. My grandmother lived on for a good many years after that, but except for an attractive habit she had of giving me a ten-shilling piece every time I went to see her, she did not make very much impression upon me.

My father thought that he derived almost entirely from his father; I doubt whether that was quite true. He certainly had a horror of ostentation in every form. He never would have a man-servant in the house because he thought that that savoured of ostentation. He would rather have travelled in a Ford than a Rolls Royce. But there was nothing grim about him, and both in his home and in his office he got the attention given to love rather than to fear. He was generous, sociable and enormously popular with the people he liked. But it is true that he by no means liked everyone—he never did suffer fools gladly: a considerable

part of the world was summed up as "a dull fellow and I've nothing in common with him"—and that the people he did not like seldom liked him. With them he certainly was taciturn and a trifle grim, and perhaps rather frightening.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

My mother, Sybil Margaret Haig, came, as I have said, from quite a different environment and tradition from that of my father. The Haigs are an old Scottish Border family and as clannish as is common to such folk. Their crest and motto, chosen for them, so tradition has it, by Thomas the Rhymer, suits them almost as well in the twentieth century as it did in the twelfth: a granite rock and the words: "Tyde what may what ere betyde Haig shall be Haig of Bemersyde."\* No talk of king or country, no high-flown Latin nonsense arrogating to themselves any of the more recondite virtues. Just a quiet granite-like insistence on the duty of looking after the family. They have lived up to it for the better part of a thousand years. Bemersyde has never been entailed. It has passed not only from father to son. It has passed on more than one occasion from cousin to distant cousin. But through all the changes and chances of the Border country it has never since the twelfth century belonged to any who did not bear the name of Haig.

Every well-brought-up Haig knows every relation he has in the world up to his fourth cousins at least, knows the exact difference between a second cousin twice removed and a third cousin, and can tell you on the instant to which category any relation of his whom you may chance to mention belongs. I

\* Bemersyde in the county of Berwickshire, now in the possession of Lord Haig of Bemersyde. The motto is commonly shortened to "Tyde what May." I have given it in its complete form.



have noticed that English people are usually far less well educated in such matters.

Clannishness has many advantages. But it also has disadvantages. The true Haig almost always marries a cousin because he is scarcely aware that anyone outside his own family exists. No Haig really wants to know anyone in the world well except his own relations. And, indeed, he has neither the time nor the emotional margin left to do it with. A family which keeps up not merely with all its first cousins (my mother had seventy-two first cousins), but also with its second and third cousins, has all its affections and interests fed, and indeed almost sur-fed, without looking beyond the ties of blood.

To my mother, one's own family—even, as I have said, to third and fourth cousins—must always matter more than other people. And with that sense of clannishness, too, goes pride in and detailed knowledge of all one's forebears even to many hundreds of years ago. I grew up aware of a profound difference between this outlook and that of my father, who would no more have thought of making special friends with a relation *qua* relation than of liking a man because he happened to have red hair. He liked people for themselves, usually because he found them interesting to talk to, and for no other reason in the world. As a child I wavered between the two points of view, but gradually as I got older I decided that although the clan and ancestor worship theory of life had a certain romance about it, it was not really an adult point of view, permanently tenable in a civilised society.

More and more I inclined to agree with my father, who (to the amusement of his in-laws, who regarded it as among the most far-fetched of David's jokes and did not so much as trouble to argue the point) used to declare that for his

part he held to the view that water is thicker than blood. And the older I grow the more certain I become that the only civilised and interesting method of selecting one's friends is to choose, regardless of whether they chance to be or not to be related to one, the people one finds most interesting and attractive. But the other method is simpler, less trouble, and a good deal more fool-proof. When the family searchlight has beaten upon a person since he was born you know pretty well all there is to know about what he is likely to do or not to do. You know, in fact, where you are with him. He is a safe friend.

One result of the habit of living entirely within the limits of the family is a certain slackening of the force of the ordinary conventions. This tendency in the particular instance of my mother's family was reinforced by the fact that they had been brought up eleven miles from a town, in the days before motor-cars, when eleven miles really was eleven miles, and seven miles across the hills from their nearest neighbours.

Undoubtedly the Haigs ran to a certain originality—at least, my grandfather's branch did ("Haigs over fifty," declared my father, "are all mad"); and when I speak of my grandfather's branch I refer not merely to his own ten children, but also to such of the descendants of his twelve brothers and sisters, and of my grandmother's, who was, as usual, also his cousin, and of their innumerable uncles and aunts, as I have met. In the women it was more marked than in the men. Whether Public School and Varsity exercised a restraining influence on the males, or whether just as colour-blindness is said to exist chiefly in men, so freakishness is a quality which comes out more often in females, I cannot say. But it was so.

Take my mother's sisters, for example. There is un-

doubtedly a marked lack of conventionality in my god-mother, Aunt Lotty. It was there, perhaps even more pronounced, in Aunt Janetta. Aunt Janetta was my mother's eldest sister, and she was a most entertaining aunt. In the first place she was very beautiful to look at, one of the most beautiful people I have ever known, and when we were children she was, like Aunt Lotty, usually ready to play with us (she had, however, four daughters of her own, so that she never gave the same effect as did Aunt Lotty, who was unmarried, of being common property). She used to sing to us a great deal—old ballads and songs. She had a very good voice. And she painted miniatures. She used to exhibit every year in the Academy, the Paris Salon and various art galleries. And for many years (until her eyesight was no longer good enough for such fine work) she took commissions for miniature portraits—received, indeed, far more orders than she ever had time to cope with—and spent most of her time painting. Painting seemed to run in the family during that generation—probably in part because that was the accepted outlet permitted to girls of that period. Four out of the five sisters painted, and had great pleasure in it. My mother, who, like my aunt, painted miniatures, also exhibited occasionally in the Academy and various galleries. Scarcely a one of my generation so much as put brush to paper.

At Pen Ithon, each summer, Aunt Janetta was a continual source of interest and excitement. There was, for instance, the year when she brought with her a book on edible toadstools, with coloured plates. The country round Pen Ithon is a mass of toadstools. Every day Aunt Janetta, accompanied by a joyous band of children, went off toadstooling with her book. The toadstools we picked were carefully compared with the coloured plates to see whether they

looked like the poisonous or edible variety, and when she had decided, which she usually did, that they were edible (for her view was that toadstools are a malignant race and are mostly delicious and wholesome to eat, if only we had a little more courage), she brought them home, took them to the kitchen and explained to the cook exactly how she wanted them prepared for the evening meal. When they appeared, all shapes and colours and sizes in a huge dish, the children whooped for joy, but the other mothers sat in the deepest anxiety. However, of this they dared show very little, for Aunt Janetta was the eldest of the family and they all held her in considerable awe. So the children gobbled up the toadstools, and I am bound to say that Aunt Janetta's faith appeared to be justified, for no one got poisoned.

When her children were small Aunt Janetta believed strongly in the efficacy of Jaeger garments. Her four little girls were clad in Jaeger from top to toe, and even wore Jaeger boots and blew their poor little noses on Jaeger handkerchiefs, which when one happens to have a cold are, so they told me, very scratchy.

Aunt Janetta washed all her own clothes and dried her handkerchiefs on the window-panes instead of ironing them. This she did (although she kept a laundry-maid for the household clothes, so that they could not have mixed with those of strangers) because she could not bear the idea of her clothes coming into contact with anyone else's, even though they were members of her own family. In later life she became a Theosophist—although I rather doubt whether even there she was strictly orthodox—and on that head I once listened to one of the most entertaining discussions which I have ever heard. Aunt Janetta, Cousin Etta (another Haig cousin of her generation), and I, were re-

turning from Henley and had to change and wait some while at Slough. It was just after one of the bank holidays and the crinkled black-brick station platform was at its worst. Bits of paper and a good many spits disfigured it. Cousin Etta was a keen Christian Scientist, and as we walked up and down the station a hot discussion sprang up between her and Aunt Janetta concerning the platform. Cousin Etta maintained that the platform was not there at all. Aunt Janetta, on the other hand, poured utter scorn upon this view. Certainly the platform was there, and it was made, like everything else in the universe, of God. The argument continued heatedly until the time for our departure. I have seldom passed the time waiting for a train so agreeably; my one regret was that there was no one there to share my pleasure.

It was Aunt Janetta who when a cousin died sent with her funeral wreath a card bearing the words "Heartiest congratulations." She believed quite firmly that the next world was pleasanter than the present one; she did not think that the cousin in question had been having much of a time in this life, and, as usual, she acted quite simply up to her beliefs. It has always seemed to me a very reasonable inscription, but it must, I imagine, have startled the family when it arrived.

\* \* \* \* \*

My mother is rather more conventionally-minded than most of her family. Theoretically she believes quite strongly in the conventions, and many of them she really tries to keep. But (as I discovered when I married) she does not in these matters begin to compare with the average correct English person. Her difficulty lies in having been brought up at Pen Ithon, and always lived inside her family. Her

intentions are of the most orthodox, but she can never really quite remember what all the various conventions are; and when she happens to think one of them silly she decides at once that it cannot really be the right thing to do. Still, she gets on quite well with conventional people. In fact, she gets on very well with most people. She is a sociable and popular person. In her taste in people she was always far less selective than either my father or myself. Or perhaps I should rather say that she used a totally different measuring-rod; for, like the rest of her family, she divided the world, in her heart, as I have said, into people who were relations and those who were not. Her taste in people might not be selective in my father's sense, but, based as it was on the simple principle common to all Haigs, it was selective enough in its own way. If a person was a relation she was *ipso facto* fond of them, and the closer the relationship the fonder she was. She seemed to have no difficulty in working to rule in the matter. She might enjoy meeting strangers, get on with them excellently and like—with kindly friendliness—almost all of them: the people that really mattered to her were relations. Consequently she found it almost impossible to understand that one could have as strong tastes and distastes in people as in food or furniture; that whilst the company of some might give one vivid pleasure, the company of many others made one feel as if one had sand in one's bed. And she found it, moreover, quite impossible not, gently, to disapprove. Such an attitude was scarcely kind. This entirely different measuring-rod for people sometimes made the selection of house-parties difficult.

\* \* \* \* \*

My mother was undoubtedly in so far conventional that I was in certain respects very strictly and correctly brought

up. Some odd little examples of the Victorian quality of her attitude stand out in my memory. One or two are so far removed from the modern habit of mind as to be perhaps worth retailing. One evening—I must have been about eight years old—when all the grown-ups had gone off to the neighbouring town, a small boy of about my own age who was staying in the house at the time came into my room after our lights had been put out, and settled down on the bed to talk till the grown-up party came home. Obviously this was against the rules since we ought by rights to have been asleep; but what shocked my mother about it when she found out was not that I had stayed up late, but that I had had a boy in the room when I was in bed. Such a thing must never happen again. Why, I inquired, did it matter so much? He might, my mother pointed out, have caught sight of a certain domestic article of furniture under the bed, and that would have been dreadful. Since she said it would have been dreadful I tried to suppose that it would, but I never quite saw why.

Every Sunday my mother took me to church. My father did not go, my Aunt Lotty did not go, and there came, fairly early on, a strong feeling on my part that there was no really sound reason why I should go. “I can’t see that it can do me any good when I hate it,” said I. “The more you hate it,” replied my spartan mother, “the more good it does you,” and the churchgoing continued.

It may be supposed that a person of such very strict views living in the modern world must find some difficulty of accommodation, and I think my mother deceives herself for her own comfort over a good many things. She finds, I imagine, that the world looks prettier and less frightening when, in certain directions, it is draped and veiled and screened. But she has never had to deceive herself over the

question of her own honesty of purpose or goodness of intention—for there is no need. And all through one's childhood that singleness of purpose was a thing one was very fully conscious of. One might dissent—as I grew into my 'teens I often did—one always respected, one always trusted, one always felt safe. Intellectually I very early rejected much in my mother's view of life, but I think that temperamentally it influenced me a good deal for many years, probably does still.

●



## CHAPTER III

### A MAIDEN AUNT

EVEN amongst Haigs, Aunt Lotty—Charlotte Wolseley Haig—deserves a chapter to herself. At Pen Ithon, at least, all the rest of the family together did not make half so much difference to us as she did.

When I first remember it her hair was curly and golden and very long; it is long and curly yet, though it is white now. It was so long that when in the course of dressing she hung it down like a cloak around her, any two of us could, we believed, play hide-and-seek with each other standing close up against her, hidden inside the thick tresses. Our hide-and-seek theory and our attempts to put it into practice must, one supposes, have considerably impeded her dressing arrangements; but then much that we did must have impeded any attempt on her part to get on with her own plans. It seems to me, looking back, that almost all of every day of the long summer holidays she was playing games with us—"King of the Castle" up and down the steep bank in front of the house; "Honey-Pots" ("Which will you be, heather honey, or clover honey, or rhododendron honey, or apple-blossom honey, or honeysuckle honey, or wild-rose honey, or . . . ?" and one became a honey-pot and clasped one's hands under one's knees and was swung to and fro and weighed—"Twelve, thirteen, *fourteen* pounds; oh, *what* a heavy pot!"—and bargained for by the honey merchant); "Bull" across the lawn by the greenhouse; or hide-and-seek all over the garden. Or she was bathing with us, or climbing along the river-side rocks, or

taking us for all-day picnics miles away across the gorse and heather-clad moors.

On wet days she used to read to us for hours at a stretch : "Ernie Elton the Lazy Boy," or "Holiday House," or "Coral Island." . . . Or tell us stories, long and wonderful and most thrilling stories. . . . And neither in the stories she told us nor in the tales she read to us, nor in the books she gave us, did any one of the children ever behave well.

When we woke up in the morning the first one awake would shout, "Bags I Aunt Lotty's left hand," and that hand was its own property for the day. The second one awake shouted, "Bags I her right hand"; but this was a less satisfactory hand because she was apt to carry a stick or a basket in it. The others had to content themselves with being next but one, or even, if they woke up very late, next but two.

She certainly was, during the holidays, entirely at our disposal. That is not to say, however, that she was completely the slave of any one of us. In fact, she was in some ways rather a terrifying person. It is true that she was always ready to play, but one never quite knew when she might snap one's head off. She was moody and uncertain, and she had a temper which at its worst came pretty near to violence. She controlled it far better when she was dealing with children than she did when she was dealing with grown-up people, with whom she made uncommonly few efforts at restraint at all that I ever discovered; but even with us it would flash out occasionally or she would suddenly notice and comment bitingly upon some irritating trait, which doubtless she had been aware of in our mothers, and regretted to notice had been transmitted.

I do not remember, however, that her temper made her any the less dear to us. For my part I considered her to be

one of the most wonderful women in the world—in fact, a complete model of all the important virtues. I copied her handwriting (that was a mistake). I tried to copy her singing voice. What I liked best about her was that she gave herself none of the airs of a grown-up, and appeared to enjoy things just as much as I did myself, and, as it seemed to me, much the same things. She disliked the same things too. When I told my mother that if put to it by a shortage of cash I should much sooner steal than beg, she replied severely that I held that heterodox view merely because I was too young to know better. I did not believe her (wherein I was, I fear, right; for I still—though no doubt I should not—feel the same way about that predicament). Now, Aunt Lotty, I could feel pretty sure, even though quite grown-up, would share my view as to the respective attractions of stealing and begging. Another attractive thing about her was that she never went to church. I had to. But how satisfactory to find a grown-up person who took entirely the same view of it that I did, and was able to put her desires into practice! She always declared that she had killed her conscience. I took this to mean—why Heaven knows—that she was completely selfish; and for some reason I liked her for that tremendously. How delicious to find a grown-up who had all the natural human vices; one who had not merely never conquered selfishness, but who actually gloried in the fact! I could not sufficiently admire her for it.

I was slow at putting two and two together. It was many years before it occurred to me that a person who for weeks on end was prepared to put herself completely at the disposal of a pack of small children every day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. could scarcely be such a shining example of selfishness as I had supposed. By the time I did realise it I no

longer regarded selfishness as the cream of all the cheery virtues, so her reputation remained for me untarnished.

She had other virtues unusual in the grown-up, or indeed infant, variety of the human species. There was in her no faintest touch of the schoolmistress, no faintest hint of patronage. She might rage at one. But she raged on terms of complete equality, as one human being to another, not as one of a superior race to whom has been entrusted the duty to attempt the improvement of a lower order of beings. Also she had never acquired any of the usual inhibitions or correctnesses of the grown-up. Whatever it occurred to her to do she did. And it might occur to her to do the oddest things. Only a comparatively few summers ago, in the Pen Ithon billiard-room, a competition in contortions started amongst the just-grown-ups and spread to the rest of us. Our aunt—then aged sixty-three—passed through the room on her way out to a long day's sketching on the moors. "Can you put both your big toes in your mouth at once, Aunt Lotty?" inquired a struggling grand-nephew. "Certainly," replied Aunt Lotty. Dropping her sketching paraphernalia, she squatted on to the floor and did it on the spot without so much as a struggle. The only other member of the house-party who succeeded in getting them both in at the same time was a grand-niece of hers, aged three.

It is true that Aunt Lotty did, and still does, things on occasions that even the most devoted niece could scarcely ethically defend. As witness the day, not so very many years ago either, when several of us elder folk were sitting on the Pen Ithon steps watching a fight between three children; one a big girl who had lost her temper, the others, two small children who by gnat-like pertinacity had persuaded her to lose it and were now reaping the rather unpleasant conse-

quences. It was against all the traditions of the Haigs to attempt to separate combatants so long as they wanted to go on fighting; indeed, I doubt whether such an idea ever occurred to any member of the family. But Aunt Lotty's blood was boiling at what she regarded as an unwarrantable bit of bullying on the part of the elder girl, and she felt that the younger ones, who were getting the worst of it, and were being a bit knocked about, needed additional weapons. Her eyes blazing with indignation, she drew out a hat-pin and, springing forward, pressed it into the hand of the small boy. It really was rather a dangerous thing to do, for he was still at an age when he was unlikely to discard any weapon that came handy. However, nobody's eyes got put out.

In the evenings she wore pretty clothes. She used often to dress in a dark blue velvet frock which looked, I thought, lovely; but in the daytime even my admiring eyes could not suppose that her clothes were fashion-plate models. She thought nothing thirty years ago, and indeed she thinks almost as little to-day, of a twenty-mile walk over the moors. (The Haigs are all good walkers except my mother, who never willingly steps outside her garden. That even she can walk, however, if put to it, is shown by the fact that once—at the age of fifty-six—stung by the scorn of the family and encouraged by a high bet, she suddenly walked twenty-three miles in one day—just to show us. The next day she reverted—none the worse—to her garden.) Aunt Lotty walked in old sand-shoes, hatless, her curly hair flying out in long ends in the wind like a witch's horns, her tweed skirt hitched up to a suitable length for bogs and hedges by means of a long piece of string tied round her waist—looking more like a tramp than any self-respecting tramp would dare to look. She once went for a walking tour in the Lakes, and told me with pride on her return that on no

single occasion had any hotel mistaken her for a tramp. It does say a good deal for their perspicacity. When her nieces first grew up and were at the stage of being more clothes-conscious than they afterwards became, they must sometimes have taken more exception to her clothes than I can now remember. For I do recollect one occasion when another niece and I (then in our late 'teens) went secretly to her wardrobe, took out and burnt a coat and hat whose age had, we felt, earned them rest: set off for London and shared between us the cost of new ones which we chose to replace them. We were a favoured couple, and I do not remember that she in any way objected.


She was a model godmother. She never forgot a birthday. All through my childhood every year on the twelfth of June (she used to stay with us at Llanwern in June) she would get up early and make me a beautiful fat wreath of little pink Scotch roses. And her birthday and Christmas presents were always exactly the things one wanted.

In the holidays when the house was crowded I used to sleep in her room, and in the early morning before we got up (doubtless I woke before seven and expected to be entertained) she would talk to me about astronomy and read me bits out of some book she had, which told one marvellous things about the stars. She, too, it was who first taught me such things as the names and kinds of trees; from her I learnt to recognise elms and oaks and limes and beeches, to know a plane from a sycamore—for some reason I always wanted to mix up those two—and damson blossom from cherry or pear—which last, oddly enough, many people never learn. What I did not learn about trees from her or from my father I learnt by climbing them, which teaches you things that nothing else does—the relative safety of an oak

branch, a beech branch and an elm branch, for example. Never trust an elm. A beech branch has to be two or three times the size of an oak to be safe, and an elm three or four—and then it likely enough turns out to be rotten inside.

Later on it was Aunt Lotty who first introduced me to Matthew Arnold's poems and pressed upon my attention Gibbon's "Decline and Fall." The poems I read till I knew them by heart, but my recollection is that I stuck in Gibbon's "Decline and Fall." . . . She always read every scientific book she could lay her hands on. She had wanted to become a doctor, but the idea was firmly stamped upon by her family. She had thought of it thirty years too soon. She also wanted to go into business, but here again her people refused. She was the only unmarried daughter in a family of five boys and five girls, and it was expected of her that she should do her duty in that capacity at home. Few people could have been more ill-suited for the job. However, she was devoted to her mother and, in fact, seemed to live happily enough. She had—and still has—too much vitality and joy of life to be anything but happy a good part of the time wherever she might happen to be.

Certainly she was a big influence in the lives of her young nephews and nieces.



## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY ADOLESCENCE

THERE are disadvantages about being an only child. But there are also advantages. The occasionally advanced theory that only children miss trouble through never being made in their youth to feel jealous, or less wanted, or less successful than another brother or sister has, I think, some foundation in fact. Also one gets time to think. Too much time, perhaps. For hours together I used to sit up in the branches of the great beech tree at the south corner of the Llanwern garden and tell myself stories. That is not good for any child. At best it teaches it to withdraw into a world of unreality; at worst it can become an overpowering disease like drink or drug-taking, which makes all real contact with the visible world illusory. At night also I told stories to myself, but then my mother, who came every evening to say good-night to me (she had one special white silk tea jacket which I admired greatly and always hoped she would wear), used to put her hand on my forehead, and if it was hot she said, "You've been telling yourself stories," and invariably I had. And then she would make me promise to stop and go to sleep.

In the early days the stories were always about huge families of children; the favourite name for the heroine varied between Bluebell, Gypsy and Madge, according to the colour of her hair and eyes, but, being fair myself, I usually preferred them dark. By the time I was fifteen or sixteen—and the habit was too strongly formed to be broken by going to school—they usually concerned strong emotional



conflicts between married couples. They were never about engaged couples—pre-marriage I found dull. Sometimes I myself was the heroine, in which case—at that age—the love interest vanished (I think the idea of such a thing as love-making in which I myself shared still embarrassed me) and was replaced by a tale in which I, dressed in a strikingly beautiful frock—usually white—having come out first in the Cambridge Tripos, rescued large portions of my family from a burning house. The frock remained as immaculate at the end of the rescue as it had been when the story started—indeed, the *finale* of the affair, which partook of a general recognition of all my qualities, was really the frock's great hour. Telling myself stories went on all through my 'teens and twenties. Sometimes I would go for weeks or even months at a time without telling myself one, and then a new and enthralling story would start and for days I would go about scarcely conscious of the world around me, refusing to speak more than I could help, longing all the while to get back to my tale, and at night I would lie awake till three and even four in the morning, whilst the tale grew more and more passionate and emotional and impossible as the hours wore on. I broke myself of the habit, with a big effort, in my middle thirties.

Also, largely no doubt because I was an only child and therefore a lonely child, with early adolescence came queer moods and troubles. I would spend many months torturing myself about such things as the nature and passage of time; the nature of reality; the impossibility of contact between one person and another, and the necessary isolation of every human being; the difference between past, present and future; what happiness was; the purpose, if any, of existence. I did not use such phrases, of course, to describe my thoughts and feelings, indeed I knew of no way of describing them,

for I got them out of no book; they sprang ready-made into my mind clothed in no language that I had ever learnt to use. They churned over and over in my head like a squirrel in a cage. I was not yet twelve when the first of these torturing black moods started. For long years I imagined that I alone in the whole world suffered from them, and they were made far worse by that. They caused an almost unbearable sense of isolation. I can scarcely think of them without wincing now.

I must have been about thirteen or fourteen when I discovered the existence of prostitutes as a class set apart. The discovery made a deep impression on me, and I took a vow to myself that all my life I would do what I could to see that the terrible injustice of scorning them and treating them as untouchables simply because they performed the sexual act for money should be done away with. It was one of the only two vows that I took to myself through my whole childhood.

The mystery that everyone made about sex had so aroused my curiosity that I had, some while earlier, set myself to find out what it was all about. Had no mystery been made I should probably have remained in ignorance for some years longer. As it was I had succeeded after much difficulty in finding out what the sexual act was; and the thing that puzzled me, when I did find out, was why everyone made so much fuss about it. It seemed to me quite inadequate to all the mystery that was made about it, and to all the trouble I had been put to, to discover what it was. It seemed, I thought, such a little thing. I was still then totally unaware of the existence of the thrill of physical contact. Although I knew from what I discovered that people wanted to do this thing, and even paid money to do it, I knew it only

on paper, so to speak. I did not really understand why they felt like that. For the thing in my mind was connected with no kind of emotion. I cannot remember, for example, that the heroes and heroines of the tales I told myself ever went to bed together, and this not because it would have shocked me (although I daresay it would), but because it meant nothing to me. I understood with my brain, but neither physically nor emotionally. I suppose I was still physiologically a child, so that to think that people should be scorned and treated as outcasts for this one simple little physical act seemed then even more monstrous than it does now.

My mother's attitude towards the relations of the sexes was exceedingly strict. Indeed, she went so far as to believe that no really nice girl ought to enjoy talking to men as such, or find them so easy to talk to as women. There were so few subjects she felt that one had, or at least ought to have, in common with them. One's husband, she believed, should be the sole exception to this rule. She showed kindly indulgence (and, whenever occasion needed, a remarkably complete protective blindness) towards those of her acquaintance who failed to see eye to eye to her on this point. But she did do all that in her lay to inculcate her own attitude of mind in her daughter. I remember when I was eleven years old going to see "The Geisha" with my parents. At one point in the play a young woman is kissed by a man to whom she is not engaged. My mother leant across to me. "Such a thing as that," she explained anxiously, "never happens in real life." I reminded her of the incident the other day, and pointed out that the effect of her comment, even on a child of eleven, had been to make me quite certain that it *did* happen in real life. "But," replied my mother, "it never does—except with women who aren't nice women."

Theoretically I never, not even at twelve years old, accepted her point of view, but I imagine that practically it had a considerable effect.

\* \* \* \* \*

The games which are easy to play by oneself are reading and writing. I got through much reading, Scott and Kingsley, Kipling's Jungle Books, and all the usual children's books of the period. Adventure stories I generally preferred. The usual stories about girls' schools seemed to me almost as unspeakable then as they do now. However, I read them—I read anything that came my way. I had in those days the literary digestion of a shark. And I wrote. The only story I can recall was about a green-eyed heroine called Beryl, who got shipwrecked, but what happened to her after that I cannot remember. I think I just got tired of her in mid-ocean.

Fairly early on it occurred to me that even more amusing than writing oneself, and far less trouble, would be to edit a magazine in which other people wrote. So I started one. It was called *Spring Tide*. Later it changed its name to *The Shooting Star*. Not long ago the late Mr. H. O. Hughes of Anglesey, who thirty years ago was my father's private secretary, gave me a copy that he had preserved. It is printed, and is dated May, June, July and August 1899. I expect Mr. Hughes, who had a very soft spot for children, helped us to get the printing done. On the cover besides its name, and mine as editor, is the remark: "Price 6d. (Contributors Free)." The contributors were mostly cousins. On one page is an editorial announcement which runs as follows: "I am going to have an advertisement page in which anyone may advertise; the charge will be 1d. per line. I can guarantee a circulation of twelve, which will very probably increase. I intend having a double Christmas number,


which will have the very best of contributions (only the *very* best will be accepted for it); it will be twice the usual size, besides having—perhaps—sketches and pictures in it. It will, however, cost a shilling to non-contributors and must be ordered beforehand—in fact, I do not propose having it unless I get orders for twenty copies before the 1st of October. I shall be pleased to receive pictures as well as poems, stories, articles, etc., for the Christmas number, but these will not be inserted in it unless they are specially good; I shall also reserve any very good contributions which I may get for the September and October number for the Christmas number. This number is the May, June, July and August numbers rolled into one.”

That Christmas number, however, never did appear. I rather think that the copy Mr. Hughes preserved was the last. Perhaps I had trouble with my contributors. It seems possible, as one of my editorial habits appears to have been to offer severe criticism of their contributions in the same issue in which these were printed. As, for example: “This [contribution] is rather too much in the style of the answers sent in when the editor of a children’s magazine, or a form mistress in a high school, asks the children to write an essay. . . . I doubt its getting a prize in one or maximum in the other; the whole thing is a bit too long.” Or again: “Some . . . authors have a wonderful knack of choosing appropriate *noms-de-plume*—that, for instance, of ‘A. Greenhorn’ was almost superfluous; who but a greenhorn could have written such a foolish and vacillating article?”

An editorial note on another page complains of the difficulty of getting in contributions. It runs: “This number of *The Shooting Star* has been unavoidably delayed on account of the Editor’s illness [measles]. I have received very few letters this time. I don’t know why: I wish people

would write oftener; it is so easy to write a letter (it need not be a very long one), and the ones who say they have no time for writing anything else could easily find time to send at least a short letter. Also, I wish that more outsiders (I mean people who are not contributors, but just happen to read the magazine) would write and say what they think about everything; they would not be prejudiced. As I have started saying what I want people to do, I may as well add that it would be very nice if everyone sent in their MS. of their own free will, without my having to go touting round for it; it is pure laziness on their part when they do not, and it would save a lot of trouble if they did."

In view of these not altogether surprising editorial difficulties it seems possible that this number would in any case have been the last. But I rather think that my departure for school was the final blow. I must have gone up to St. Leonards just after the issue of this number. And during the happy, busy years that followed all thought of such things vanished.



## CHAPTER V

### A SCRAP BOOK OF SCHOOL MEMORIES

*Nous n'irons plus au bois, les lauriers sont coupés.*

"It is character," wrote Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler some thirty years ago, "character, not intellect, that governs this world and inherits the next." I do not at this date remember how she said it, why she said it, or when she said it, but certainly in one of her novels (in those days I read every one that came out) you will find approximately those words, and they made such an impression upon my young mind that to-day, when every other line of her books has vanished from me, I can repeat them still. At the time so replete with wisdom did they seem to me that I wrote them down in a pale brown exercise book in which, along with a few other treasured quotations, I kept some useful information as to the lessons expected of me next day (that was actually the pale brown exercise book's official purpose), various lists of teams, a heterogeneous and illegible collection of information of every possible kind with which I felt it safer not to burden an even then doubtful memory, and some intimate personal details concerning the state of my affections. There was, for instance, a list of the whole House arranged in the order in which I liked them. The names were discreetly written in Greek letters, in the hope that if I left the notebook lying about open—as I constantly did—my luck would hold, and the girl who chanced to pick it up (particularly if she came near the bottom of the list) would be someone who did not take Greek. There were also mottoes considered suitable for, but not yet carved upon, my pencil-box;

but all these, the lessons, the lists, most of the mottoes, and all the other contents, are lost in the undiscoverable past—only one thing remains: “It is character, not intellect, that governs this world and inherits the next.”

It is probable that—thirty years ago—my belief in the truth of this statement received a certain reinforcement from sources not wholly untainted by personal interest. A number of mistresses were inclined to regard intellect—the kind of intellect shown in the capacity to bring into form effectively and thoroughly learned lessons—as of the first importance. I had never shared with them this enthusiasm. As the head-mistress delicately suggested in my report, I was “inclined to be impatient of drudgery.” It is possible that it was because I had come to associate intellect with patient and unoriginal assimilation of facts that I so despised it—but I doubt if that were the main reason; I think on the whole my judgment was fairly unbiassed. I honestly did think that intellect was rather despicable and believed character to be the thing that mattered.

I wonder if that is the natural, the instinctive view of youth? I do not remember what view my contemporaries took; I doubt if most of them read Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler. Henry Seton Merriman was more in their line. Still, an affection for Henry Seton Merriman would seem to support the view that they did not approve of overmuch brain in a hero, and were contented by still less in a heroine. I do not remember if others besides myself wrote down their favourite quotations in their pale brown exercise books; probably if they did they were a bit shy about them and kept the books carefully shut. Certainly they carved mottoes on their pencil-boxes—that was the fashionable thing to do—but there was a certain conventionality about the mottoes carved; they gave but scant information as to their indi-



vidual owner's views. There was, of course, Beatrice, who wrote remarks on the inside of her shoes; but then Beatrice had a definite and immediate object. She did not copy down her favourite authors; she wrote not to relieve her over-burdened soul, but her over-burdened temper. Beatrice had a low opinion of the head of the House, and she feared that the head of the House did not know how low this opinion was, so she hit upon the plan of writing all she thought about that conscientious and long-suffering creature inside her shoes, and then leaving them lying about so that the head should find them, and, as was her duty, put them into forfeit. It cost one penny to get them out of forfeit, but Beatrice regarded it as worth the money. She was an ingenious young woman. However, as I have said, I doubt if one would have found Beatrice's private and unprejudiced views of life in general inside the shoes.

Remains Prid—my best friend—with whom, strolling round the playground at hours when, strictly speaking, we should have been preparing the next day's lessons, I discussed this matter, along with many others of philosophical, historical and political interest. Prid inclined to a rather less full-blooded scorn of intellect than I. There were, Prid opined, points about intellect. But then Prid was always a bit contrary. Besides, her father was a headmaster, and it seemed possible that she insensibly adopted a slightly professional attitude towards intellect.

It may be, perhaps, that youth's definition of intellect scarcely does full value to the possibilities of the human brain. There was, for example, the affair of the mid-term history examination. It was due to take place on a Monday. Now, Prid and I were both fond of history. Moreover, we stood in reasonably wholesome awe of the history mistress.

We therefore worked at history, in moderation. I, for my part, worked at it as hard as I ever worked at anything. Still, even that standard left something to be desired. When I reflected upon the fact that the examination was due in two days' time, I felt that really it left a good deal to be desired. Action of some kind seemed indicated. Prid and I consulted together. Then we approached Caroline Hopkins and asked her to come out for a walk with us on Sunday. It was an unusual request, but Caroline came. For the subject of conversation during the walk we chose history. This pleased Caroline, for she knew much more about history than we did. Caroline had conscientiously done all the preparation that had ever been set, and Caroline had a marvellous memory; she recollected every word of it. Alternately we questioned her on dates, facts, details of events, and Caroline graciously replied. Prid and I came out first and second in that examination (I cannot now remember which of us was top, which inclines me to suppose that it must have been Prid). Caroline was only third. Whereupon the purpose of our walk dawned upon her, and she was displeased.

At the time I regarded the whole affair as one more proof of the advantages that character possessed over intellect. But it seems to me now, on looking back, that I took perhaps an unduly narrow view of intellect, nor possibly was my definition of character quite up to the standard of the best moralists.

Yet I cannot feel sure that in this controversy there is a cleavage of view between youth and age; and after all, now I come to think of it, I, who am now aged, have not entirely changed my own opinion; I did not shed it when I shed the desire to make lists and carve mottoes. A little less certain,

perhaps, of what is character and what intellect, a little more consciously aware that lack of intellect is boring—a little more sure that both are necessary to salvation. But still Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler seems to me worthy of some credence . . . a shade sweeping, perhaps, and inclined to arrogate to herself a knowledge of future arrangements which, so far as one knows, has not yet been vouchsafed either to character or to intellect, but on the whole, when all is said and done, there is quite a lot of truth in her saying: "It is character, not intellect, that governs this world and inherits the next. . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

On winter nights Prid and I used to walk round the playground together. The plan had a number of advantages. We missed thereby a half-hour's preparation that we particularly disliked, which took place in the House just before seven o'clock supper. And we loved the cool, dark playground; the grass under our feet, as, wrapped in our long hooded cloaks, we strolled round the cricket field; the great stretches of empty space spreading out round us up to the old encircling abbey walls, which we could just see here and there looming up in the darkness. We loved the fresh air blowing in clean and salt and tangy from the North Sea; and even the smell of the gasometer which stood at the lower corner of the grounds—to this day for old association' sake I enjoy the smell of a gasometer. The thing was a delicious break between the long stretch of afternoon preparation in school and the last hour of House preparation after supper. Prid, who had a passion for fresh air, could not bear being shut up indoors from four o'clock in the afternoon till nine next morning. But above all we were enabled, evening by evening, to engage on a discussion of the whole world that

was opening out before us and of all that lay within it. That hour was probably one of the most useful we spent in the whole day; for together, discussing, planning, exploring, we were educating ourselves for life.

We did not in fact discuss the whole of life. Two subjects were left right out of our reckoning, and they were rather large ones: sex and religion. I do not know what either meant to Prid in those days, but I do know that for my part I did not leave them out either because I thought them unimportant or because I was uninterested in them. I left them out because I did not think I had any right to discuss them with Prid.

At seventeen I had a conscience—a magnificent, finely grown affair (“a conscience just like a porcupine” complained Prid in a moment of exasperation, and the accusation hurt me so much that I have remembered it to this day). It would have done credit to a woman of forty, only at forty, thank goodness, one does not have a conscience like that. I was nine months older than Prid, and, at seventeen, nine months is a whole nine months. I felt my responsibilities. At the age of twelve—with the help of a donkey in foal, “Midshipman Easy,” the Bible and an older cousin—I had, as I have already related, triumphantly ferreted out the main facts concerning child-birth and procreation (that was how things happened in those days, when parents were shy and left it to chance), and I now believed that I knew all there was to know about sex. But one certainty these investigations had strongly borne in upon me, and that was that the correct procedure was to conceal such matters from the young. (“If,” said I to myself when my discoveries were completed, “they had only concealed all knowledge of geography from me as carefully as they did

all knowledge of this, how hard and how eagerly I should have worked at geography!") In theory I puzzled considerably as to why it should harm young things to know these plain facts, but in practice I accepted the view which I knew to be that of my elders; and I was genuinely clear that it would be bad for the tone of the House for such things to be discussed among the girls (though why I was so clear I cannot think), so when I came to school I banished, for the time being, the whole subject from my mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

I kept silence about religion for quite a different reason. At seventeen I thought that none of the Bible was likely to be true, and that it was probable that there was no hereafter, but I thought so only because I could no other. I hated thinking so, and the process of arriving at my conclusions had been exceedingly painful. It seemed to me that the meanest thing one person could do to another was to say anything to shake their unquestioning faith and make them endure the torments that I had myself endured—so religion also was completely taboo.

With these two exceptions, the universe, in so far as we were aware of it, was at our disposal, and together, as we strolled round and round, we talked . . . discussed . . . tried out our ideas on each other . . . compared . . . measured . . . made discoveries . . . advanced new theories . . . discussed old ones and thought aloud to each other. So engrossed did we become that often we forgot all about time and had a great rush at the end. For we had to be in five minutes before the bell went, so as to allow Prid time to wash her hands before supper. She was distinguished among her thirty House-mates by the fact that she actually enjoyed washing.

Our very wise House-mistress rather encouraged these strolls in the dark than otherwise. I do not doubt that she knew that that half-hour was as useful to us as any part of the day's education. When, however, we—anxious to share a good thing—tried to persuade the whole House to follow, our example, she put a firm foot down.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

When I try to remember the details of our discussions the names that come first into my mind are those of Erasmus, Martin Luther and Sir Thomas More. We must have been doing that period of history one winter term, and those three characters interested us enormously. We found in the House simulacra of all three, compared in some detail the House politics of the moment with the political aims, feuds and cliques of Renaissance Europe, and the States of Renaissance Europe with the various Houses in school. We decided upon the attributes which our House shared with England and the attributes which the rival House to ours shared with France, and we assigned European nationalities to each of the other seven Houses—more or less attractive nationalities according to our estimates of the Houses. We always made the historical characters that interested us into prototypes of people in the House; this method gave them just that touch of topical interest which made them really come to life. Looking back, the school equivalents of the outstanding figures of the Renaissance period do seem to me to have been a little inadequate, especially Sir Thomas More's understudy. She had charm certainly, but it does not seem to me to-day that she had much else, and after all charm alone would scarcely have won Sir Thomas his place in history.

We discussed, I remember, round and about, and over and over again, the rival merits and the right way of working

democracy and autocracy, kingship and oligarchy, and we knew how to impart to that discussion, too, just the local application it needed to give it savour—to what extent was the school or (what interested us much more) our own House an autocracy or a democracy? There was Miss X—in command, of course, but on the other hand there were the monitors, chosen from among us, and they had a good deal of power too, but public opinion counted also—my impression is that we decided that the House was some kind of hybrid democracy. If so, our decision seems to me to have said a good deal for Miss X—'s rule and something for her diplomacy, but not very much for our own perspicacity.

Really, when one looks back it seems that what we were actually discussing almost all the time was politics—international politics—taken from history and well mixed according to our own special patent with the savoury subject of House gossip, but none the less, perhaps the more, real politics for all that. It was politics in those days that interested us most, though not yet contemporary politics.

Part of our education? Yes, that those strolls undoubtedly were, and yet what were they educating us for? For we were girls, and the things we discussed were not for our touching. How far could all those talks influence our after life? If we had been boys we should almost certainly, I imagine, have turned in early adult life to politics. But we were not boys. . . . Easy enough to discuss at school the courses of action proper to Prime Ministers, and the best way of managing a democracy, but with girls it had, so it seemed, to end in talk.

I wish I could listen-in now to the children who all those

years ago strolled round the dark playground. Can it be true that when we discuss things to-day we have scarcely one word or thought in common with them? I should like to be able to hear all the differences. Are they really so complete as one imagines? And yet when Prid and I are together—for we still meet, though not so often now—it does not seem so different as all that. The world remains uncommonly interesting, and though we do, perhaps, know a bit more about ourselves, we know of it, after all, only an imperceptible fraction more than we did then. And still when we start discussing the eternities we are apt to forget time.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*                      \*

Every Sunday the whole House had to sit itself down to one hour's silent reading, each person choosing some book of solid worth which had been duly passed by Miss Sandys. This hour's exercise was commonly known as Stale—if the title had originally been given in disgust all emotional colour had long ago departed from it, though I have no doubt that it did in fact fit the feelings of the majority of the readers fairly accurately. There was, however, a considerable minority which, if it would not actually have gone so far as to practise the regular weekly discipline of setting aside a time for quiet, solid reading without some outside compulsion, was glad enough to have that compulsion put upon it, and found both rest and peace and food in an hour which was by no means the least pleasurable of the week. To that minority I belonged.

It must be said that Miss Sandys knew how to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. The Lower Fifths were allowed to read Scott for Stale. And a good many other books were on occasion agreed to which could scarcely have passed



for solid reading in less indulgent circles. I remember that I once (I must have been well up in the school at the time), after some little difficulty, persuaded her that "Elizabeth and her German Garden" was a suitable book for Stale. "There is," I pointed out, "no story in it." Miss Sandys was just a little doubtful, but finally she twinkled and allowed it.

I was an omnivorous reader. My taste in literature was the subject of some unkind comment from my friends. It was certainly catholic. I enjoyed some of the people I ought to enjoy, but I enjoyed also a great many people whom I ought not to have enjoyed, and on the whole I suspect that I enjoyed them more. I liked poetry—I got no credit for that among my school mates who did not. I demanded, I remember, the whole of Byron for a Christmas present, and got him in what I suspected at the time was an expurgated edition, but I do not know how much I read of him when I got him. Browning I liked, but Matthew Arnold more. Aytoun's "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers" and a number of Stevenson's Ballads I knew by heart. Kipling I adored, whether verse or prose. Tennyson I liked very much, but for some mysterious reason was ashamed of liking—though I was not in the least ashamed of liking Florence Barclay's "The Rosary." On the other hand, I enjoyed enormously John Stuart Mill and Froude the historian.

I suppose that on the whole my favourite authors at sixteen were Kipling and Anthony Hope, but I was capable of reading and enjoying any number of the most sloppy and sentimental of novels. I remember one novel of that order in which I became completely absorbed during the middle of one term, to the temporary blotting out of all mundane matters, including work. How I got hold of it I cannot imagine, and its name and author have long ago vanished

from my mind. It concerned a young couple who had married for some other reason than love, who subsequently fell in love with each other, and after a prolonged series of succulently sentimental scenes were united. No doubt the plot was then new to me. I remember to this day that the heroine's name was Mary, and even one sentence that she spoke: "You imply," said she to the hero, "that like olives I am an acquired taste"; but when she said it, why she said it, and why in the name of Heaven I should have remembered it for thirty years, during which so much of value has gone, goodness only knows.

The House took exception to this particular novel. They said that it ill consorted with the dignity of a member of the Lower VI to be absorbed in such tripe. To which I replied that if they would feel happier to see me holding up Bacon's Essays it was all one to me, and there and then I wrapped the book in a plain piece of brown paper, on the back of which I sketched "Bacon's Essays." At that moment Miss Sandys came in and inquired what I was reading, and I handed her the book open at the page I had reached. I was terrified that she would turn it over, see "Bacon's Essays" on the back, and imagine that I had been trying to deceive her, but she did not. She handed it back with much the same comment that the House had made, and offered her criticism in much the same light-hearted, unconcerned and impersonal manner. Whereupon I returned happy and undisturbed to my absorption. Why do odd scraps of unimportant memories like that stay so bright in one's mind all those years afterwards?

\* \* \* \* \*

So highly did I think of Anthony Hope that on one occasion I wrote an essay for the English Literature mistress,

comparing Shakespeare's development (the discussion of which was the actual subject set for the essay) from his early historical plays through "Hamlet," "Othello," "Macbeth" and "King Lear" to "The Tempest," with that of Anthony Hope from "The Prisoner of Zenda" via the "Dolly Dialogues" to "The King's Mirror." It seemed to me at the time that the development of the two mentalities as shown by their works had a good deal in common. It did not seem so, however, to the Literature mistress. Literature mistresses are apt to be unimaginative people. If instead of jumping down my throat (in which she ought to have known that she was fulfilling the best hope with which I had written my essay) she had discussed the comparison seriously, pointing out in the course of the discussion that she, personally and honestly, and quite apart from what might be the correct thing to do, took more pleasure in reading Shakespeare than Anthony Hope, and had tried to explain why she preferred him, she would have done something towards pulling one young woman another step, perhaps a big step, up the ladder that she was there to make us climb. Incidentally she might have cleared away one of my greatest difficulties, for the thing that for many years kept me from so much as opening some of the books that to-day I love best of all was the suspicion that people read and enthused over good literature not because they liked it, but because they ought to like it.

One has often heard the yarn about the naive and uncultured gentleman who explained that he knew nothing about pictures, "but I know what I like." I have never felt the faintest scorn or dislike of what has always seemed to me a thoroughly reasonable attitude. The person I find it impossible to endure is not the man who knows what he likes; it is the man who knows what he ought to like. This in-

grained bit of prejudice was even stronger at sixteen than it is now. The fact that the centuries had set their seal of approval on a writer meant nothing to me. Indeed, it made me the more mistrustful. In my view the only safe way was for each person, rejecting all guidance, to judge completely afresh for himself. The person who was so much as aware of what he ought to like was to me an unreal poseur—pose I disliked viciously—who took no pleasure whatsoever in literature for its own sake, but only in satisfying his vanity by doing “the right thing” and so being able to look down on all people who did not.

This attitude forced me into rejecting all guidance except from the select few whose probity I trusted sufficiently to believe that they would never recommend a book for any other reason than that they themselves took real pleasure in it. I was, moreover, almost as suspicious of the possibility of pose in myself as in other people. Shakespeare, for example, appeared to me to be a pleasant writer. He did not often evoke in me any strong emotion, but he did draw me to the point of causing me to read him for pleasure. But, said I to myself, do I really like him or is it merely that it is the correct thing to like him? Is he really better than all the others, or is it merely that it is the correct thing to think so? The Bible also was for me largely spoilt by the fact that it was the correct thing to admire it.

Of course one did—and does—see a good deal of affectation; and if my taste in literature was very far from unerring, my nose for pretence, whether conscious or unconscious, and for the sin of thinking the correct thing because it was the correct thing, was uncommonly sharp. Nor did I allow much in those days for mixed motives; when I smelt any pose at all I assumed that everything was pose: that where pose was, was no reality at all.

To reject an opinion merely because it is the accepted view of those who have experience in the subject is not the way to learn. Refusing all guides, I was in fact trying to navigate an uncharted sea. Nor was my own untutored taste of the calibre that is able at first sight to see the full beauty of the good and reject all the bad. But I was quite unaware of that. I did not allow anything at sixteen for the fact that study makes one see things that those who have not studied do not see. I expected to see everything at once, starting from scratch so to speak; and if I could not see, then I assumed that those who, after studying, said they could see spoke untruly. I do not know whether a very wise mistress of English literature might have argued me out of allowing my horror of pose to grow so much out of proportion as to stand in the light of acquiring knowledge of and pleasure in literature; certainly none ever did.

Prid's taste in literature was considerably less catholic than mine, and when I look back it seems to me that she had perhaps some justification for her view that it was better. At the time, however, I was vigorously sure that it was nothing of the kind. We differed far more about books than about anything else we discussed. A person who liked Ruskin (I had liked him myself in my early years, but had taken a strong dislike to him by the time I was sixteen) and who failed to see the fascination of Kipling seemed to me to be quite beyond the pale. I allowed nothing for the fact that even at fifteen Prid had enough innate fastidiousness to be unable to find any pleasure in reading "The Rosary" or stuff of the Ethel M. Dell order; on the contrary, this went against her in my mind, since it laid her under the suspicion of rejecting them merely because it was the correct thing to reject them. The fact that she did not much care

for poetry (the rhymes irritated her, so she explained) was also against her. Here was a thing that I could perceive and she couldn't. I was well aware at sixteen of the things I could perceive and other people could not. But on looking back I cannot remember that I ever, in the matter of taste, allowed anything for the possibility that I might not be able to perceive things that other people could.

●

## CHAPTER VI

### OUR HOUSE-MISTRESS

OUR House-mistress had come to the school, when it was still young, in the middle of one term in response to an urgent telegram—or as legend had it six urgent telegrams—from Miss (now Dame Frances) Dove, the then Head-mistress. She had promised to stay for a fortnight—and she stayed for twenty years.

Her red hair was beginning to show streaks of grey, but her eyebrows were magnificently orange, jutting out over her bright blue, twinkling eyes. House-legend had it that she bought her clothes in Vienna—which in those days was considered superior to Paris—wherein, if so, she was peculiar. House-mistresses do not usually go to Vienna for their clothes. But it seems to me on reflection improbable that Miss Sandys really bought hers there. It would have been both difficult and inconvenient, and she was always a practical woman. Doubtless this, like most House-legends, was true symbolically rather than actually. The facts that her clothes were indubitably attractive and becoming and, as school clothes go, just a little daring, and that she usually spent her holidays on the continent, would have been amply sufficient to account for the myth.

It was not merely her dress that suggested the Viennese legend. She had a very pretty taste in pictures, glass, old furniture, food, wine and books. Nor was good taste her only fashionable attribute. In the evenings—not in the daytime, for she spent as much of the day in the open air as her

profession permitted, and could at all times walk any of us off our legs—she sometimes played bridge in the town. And occasionally played it for money. I imagine that the stakes in St. Andrews seldom surpassed a shilling a hundred. Still, in those days money was money. It was said that in the holidays she occasionally smoked. Thirty years ago smoking was considered almost fast. She was a perfect hostess. Her manners were the best I had ever seen then; or for that matter have ever seen since. They were the spontaneous good manners of a very warm heart, upon which much moving about among all kinds and conditions of people had put that final polish and assurance which only the world can give.

The House took pride in her as a woman of the world, and a woman of the world, among other things, she undoubtedly was. But she had attributes which went to the making of something far greater than a woman of the world. There was not one ounce of pose in her whole composition. Never in her life had she played for one second to the gallery. She had nerves of iron. Strength, health and vitality both of mind and body which nothing seemed able to shake. She had more generosity in her little finger than most people have in their whole body. She was, I should imagine, almost always happy. She had in full measure the three necessary attributes of happiness: courage, self-discipline and unselfishness. That abounding vitality, moreover, that love of her fellow creatures, and of the world, and of all that was beautiful and pleasing in it, that immense pleasure in giving, could scarcely fail to make for happiness. Certainly she always seemed happy, though she did not by any means always seem pleased. Her flashes of temper went on occasions appropriately enough with the scintillating blue eyes and the fierce orange eyebrows.



I do not know in what school she had bought her wisdom, but I do know that it was as good of its kind as the books, or the food or the Vienna gowns. And she had a profound knowledge of the human heart—a knowledge which was, for all her kindly generosity, entirely unvitiated by sentiment. She was in consequence neither easily shocked (it seems to me, looking back, that she may on occasions have found this something of a difficulty) nor easily deceived. She had her strong prejudices amongst the virtues and vices, however, and I remember thinking that she did attribute to us an even more scrupulous and undeviating standard of honesty than we in fact possessed—although it seems to me now that we were amazingly honest. I decided at the time that the very shadow of dishonesty was so repulsive to her that she could not bear to imagine that one single soul in her House had, even under the greatest provocation, so much as passed a note in form—and I think I was right. I remember reflecting that such a meticulous standard must on occasions have been a bit of a nuisance to her in youth; but never for a moment did I think of explaining her view, as I should have unhesitatingly explained a similar attitude in most other grown-up people, by the assumption that she had forgotten what her own young days were like.

Miss Sandys possessed never less than three Pomeranian dogs that scampered barking round her wherever she went. The noise was sometimes apt to be a little distracting, but it never distracted her. When I was still at school I was too stolid and placid and young to appreciate quite all that those yapping Pomeranians implied, but they have since seemed to me amongst the most emphatic testimonials to her nerves that anyone could have. . . .

She was just not late for prayers most mornings. She

always rustled (every self-respecting woman rustled in those days—it was the taffeta petticoat that did it) on to the school platform at the very last possible moment before prayers began. It was the only occasion on which we saw her without the Pomeranians—and so completely is my school vision of her bound up with them that when I think of her even at prayers I always see the dogs too, though in fact I know that they cannot have been there.

From time to time (usually after supper) she gave the collective House a House-row. These scoldings—in fact rare—have stayed in one's mind, as school scoldings do, when much else has gone, because they constituted a break in the ordinary routine.

She was on such occasions rather terrifying—at the same time, if one was not one of those chiefly concerned in the misdeed to which she was taking exception, House-rows were not without their alleviations. The young, after all, derive as much pleasure from smiling at their elders as their elders do from smiling at them. . . .

A favourite text for scoldings both collective and individual was backbone. . . . “I wish,” Miss Sandys would declare, “that I could put some backbone into you.” I used to try as she talked to visualise the actual process and wonder what effect transposed portions of Miss Sandys' very vital backbone would have upon each one of us. But if the operation might have been materially a little difficult to perform, spiritually it did indeed take place. There can have been few of those who passed through her House who for the rest of their life have not found reflection upon Miss Sandys' backbone a salutary talisman against temptations to slackness and self-pity.

The rows usually began quite calmly and good-

humouredly, the blue eyes twinkling round at us as she pointed to some one of our recent misdemeanours or regrettable peculiarities. Gradually, as her thoughts dwelt on our shortcomings, she would get more and more indignant until, towards the end, the whole room seemed to be enveloped in the flashing blue lightning of the storm. I take it that experience had taught her that unless she showed some indignation the House would not be impressed to the point of attempting to mend its ways, but that in fact she had some little difficulty in taking our sins as seriously as she should, and, not being one of those who can simulate an indignation they do not feel, she had hit upon this method of working herself gradually up to boiling-point. One House-row in particular stays in my mind. I forget the exact occasion. I rather think that an inextricably tangled mass composed of five young females had rolled from top to bottom of the front stairs, shouting as it bumped, just at the moment when some afternoon callers were being shown up to the drawing-room on the first floor. No doubt the visitors had thought things about the order, discipline and seemliness of the House's behaviour—and a very tender spot in Miss Sandys had thereby been touched. What I do remember vividly is that, to our intense delight, we were told in the course of the selfsame row, first that we must always remember that we did not live in a public-house, and later, when Miss Sandys had really got into her stride, that we must always remember that this *was* a public house.

It is not to be supposed that because, after the manner of youth, we derived some slight entertainment from the House-scooldings, we did not take them seriously to heart. In fact a House in which high spirits, in spite of occasional scooldings, were certainly not discouraged was always ready to obey its House-mistress's lightest word, and I suppose—

though I am not sure—that she must have known it. Certainly we took to heart every word that Miss Sandys ever uttered—and the collective House would have gaily jumped into the sea at her bidding—though, indeed, it must be said that the difficulty with the House was rather to keep it out of, than to make it go into, the sea. Legend—and well-founded legend—even had it that on one occasion a young woman, and in the Sixth Form at that, went so far as to leap from a rock into the deep sea and swim across an inlet in all her best Sunday clothes—and that under Miss Sandy's very nose. Another mistress who was present, and thought that the girl would certainly be drowned, reacted from her fear into considerable indignation, but Miss Sandys was never quite able to see that Leila had done anything that she really ought not. She suffered from not infrequent disabilities of the sort. They were amongst the things which most endeared her to her House. I have sometimes wondered whether her fellow school authorities found them equally attractive.

Among the many attributes in her House upon which Miss Sandys prided herself was the fact that we did not catch colds or influenza. This was not, of course, strictly true (on one occasion, when a new housekeeper made the mistake of doling out hot black-currant tea in bed at night to everyone threatened with a cold, I remember the whole House going down with incipient influenza within a couple of days of the spreading of the glad news), but it was true that we had a good many fewer colds than the other Houses. The House declared that the reason of our apparent immunity was that no Sandys was ever allowed to have a cold for fear of spoiling the House record; and told a lurid tale of an occasion during an influenza epidemic when Miss

Sandys had gone about boasting that there were no victims in *her* House, and of one unfortunate young member of the House (of the backboneless variety which Miss Sandys always found difficulty in suffering gladly) who on reporting sick was told that "the Sandys did not have influenza" and sent back to work. A pretty story, though not actually an accurate one. Miss Sandys' own explanation of our freedom from disease was that we went out whatever the weather, and that in *her* House all the windows were always kept open—and that they certainly were; the draughts in the schoolroom were enough to blow a table away. Miss Sandys allowed no frousting whether of mind or body.

Our House-mistress succeeded in doing many things for her girls, but she was not completely successful in making us popular with other mistresses in school. There were those amongst them who did not incline to regard our House with complete favour. There was a distinct tendency when any trouble brewed in form to suggest that the Sandys were at the bottom of it. The implication that as a House we preferred games to work was also often made. True as in the main this was, I cannot believe it to have been any truer of the Sandys than of the members of the other Houses. Indeed, our record in work compared not unfavourably with that of the other Houses. . . . It is undeniable, however, that Miss Sandys herself did take an uncommonly vivid interest in the question of which House won the Games Shield—and it is also true that the Sandys House did win it pretty often. All the same, I do not think that our preference for games, in so far as it existed, can fairly be laid to Miss Sandys' door. Her teaching was certainly not that we should prefer games to work; her teaching was simply that whatsoever our hands found to do we should do it with all our might. Perhaps that is a

maxim that does tend to encourage a certain uproariousness in the young.

I am inclined to suspect that Miss Sandys, in whom the instinct to fight for her young was not altogether lacking, sometimes stuck up very tenaciously for our rights in school. There was a story that on one occasion a mistress, famous for many things but not for her sense of justice, "detained" a member of the Sandys House, whom she happened to dislike, three times running in one week without any very sufficient cause (detention was the common punishment for bad work in form; it meant having to go back to school at two o'clock, when everyone else went into the playground, to meet the mistress concerned, and do more work with her). On the third occasion this mistress found waiting for her in the form room, not the girl, but Miss Sandys herself. . . . I would give much to have been present at the subsequent interchange.

But Miss Sandys was by no means prepared to defend us right or wrong. I remember once being "detained" by my Latin mistress when I was in the Lower Sixth Form. Now, it was contrary to the school custom that any girl in the Lower Sixth should be detained, and I went indignantly to Miss Sandys to demand justice. But Miss Sandys knew as well as did my Latin mistress, or as did I myself for that matter, that I had not been doing a stroke of work at Latin. She twinkled and told me that, rule or no rule, it wouldn't hurt me to go back. And I, still rather aggrieved but somehow assuaged by that very irresistible twinkle, had to go.

If our House-mistress expected a good deal from us in some directions, as undoubtedly she did—"do it with all thy might" is not an easy text for young or old to live up to—she took infinite trouble to give us pleasure. Standards

might be high, but treats were many. And she never expected more from us than she was prepared to give herself—or indeed one-tenth as much. What she could give might be in some directions a great deal to expect, but in others it was reasonable enough, for Miss Sandys was very human.

On one occasion a new school rule was made that no one might spend the morning hour from eight to nine in the playground. There was some suspicion that the rule was aimed at the Sandys, a number of whom, what time the members of more studious Houses worked, were said to be in the habit of spending that hour in practising lacrosse, hockey or cricket as the case might be, and so improving their chances of winning the Shield. Whatever the reason of the new rule, it is certain that Miss Sandy disliked it extremely. She was overheard grumbling about it to another Housemistress. The result of it, she declared, was to deprive some of the younger ones of a badly needed hour of fresh air. "If you think they need more fresh air," replied the spartan puritan to whom she was speaking, "you can send them out for a brisk walk." "No, I can't," replied Miss Sandys; "I know perfectly well they wouldn't go—I shouldn't go myself if I were sent for a walk at that hour of the morning, so how can I expect them to go?" "Oh, of course, if you can't make your House obey you, that is another matter. . . ." Miss Sandys' reply, if any, is not recorded.

Miss Sandys did not deal much in abstractions or generalisations. I doubt if even to herself she very consciously formulated her own creed. She just lived it, and she expected us to live it.

She always respected our individualities as persons and treated even the youngest of us in a sense as equals—not, I think, of set purpose, but because she thought of us as

equals. There was no general principle to which she adhered more scrupulously than that of avoiding forbidding whenever she possibly could. The school rules must be kept both in the letter and the spirit (the school, in those days, prided itself on having as few rules as it could possibly manage to do with); beyond that, it was in our House-mistress's view our own business to make up our minds for ourselves. We were never children to her (she never used the word), always people. She was, of course, both too intelligent and too generous to expect grapes from thorns or figs from thistles, or to think the less of the thorns or the thistles for not producing them, but in one sense of the term at least she always judged by results. It was very little use telling Miss Sandys what one had meant to do; what interested her was what one had done. Does that sound hard? There was nothing soft about Miss Sandys' gospel. Sentiment and self-pity never lived in her presence. But I do not think that it was hard. People who dare to use the measure of results for judgment must know real results when they see them, as few do, and they must know how to temper judgment with mercy; but if they can do that, then it seems to me that—remembering that most human beings, even the best of them, malingering as easily and unconsciously as they breathe—to judge, with charity and without malice, by results, is the only safe way to judge.

Thirteen to eighteen are malleable years. There must be few who passed through the Sandys House who will not, to their dying day, bear some trace of its hall-mark, and with that hall-mark carry a debt of gratitude which they can never now hope to repay.



●

CHAPTER VII  
CONFIRMATION

WE were to be confirmed.

Our headmistress gave us weekly lectures. They must have been on some branch of ethics or conduct. Perhaps they were elucidations of the Catechism. At all events, the only scrap of them that now remains is her suggestion that scrounging other people's pencils and india-rubbers came under the definition of "picking and stealing." This appeared to me at the time as a new, interesting, and possibly, to some extent, true angle from which to regard a universal custom. I do not remember, however, that I was so far moved as to allow it to have any influence on conduct.

The local clergyman also gave us lectures. They were of an excruciating dullness. Compared to them the lectures of the headmistress, who was a good speaker, shone out as periods of joy. Once I succeeded in forgetting—really forgetting—one of the clergyman's lectures, and never remembered it till I was out strolling round the playground, discussing the universe with Prid. That was a joyful evening. We both hoped that I would forget again, but I never could. According to the Code it had to be an honest forget (though the Code did not go so far as to oblige Prid to remind me), and I disliked the lectures too actively to be able to forget them easily.

In March, when the evenings grew long, they took to bundling us off to extra services on Saturday evenings. I

remember that well (though I cannot remember one thing about the actual services), because on one occasion the service prevented the three confirmees in the Sandys House from going with the rest of the House to climb St. Regulus, the old bell-tower in the Cathedral grounds, a ceremony in which the whole House was privileged to take part whenever we won the School Shield for games.

Three days before the actual day of Confirmation Miss Sandys sent for me, and asked whether the three in the House who were to be confirmed would like, for the last few nights, to move out of their various dormitories and sleep together in the Three Room. We would perhaps, she suggested, be quieter there. She was, I imagine, anxious to allow full scope and leisure, outside the bustle of normal school life, for the development of any emotion that we might at such a time be experiencing, which she herself, without undue trespassing upon our privacy, could not expect to be fully aware of.

But, for once, she was not offering us exactly what she supposed. For the truth of the matter was this: we went to bed every night at nine o'clock, and all talking ceased at ten minutes past nine. In each dormitory there was a monitor whose business it was to see that all rules were strictly kept, and in particular the rule about talking, because that was the hardest one to keep. Like all young things, our idea of heaven was to be allowed to talk all night. But we three confirmees, who were all near of an age, were none of us monitors, and the Code said (our Code, not Miss Sandys', which on this particular point was stricter) that whilst it was dishonourable for a monitor to talk or to allow talking after silence-time, no dishonour attached to those under the rank of monitor to whom lucky chance gave the opportunity of talking without being found out. Miss

Sandys therefore, instead of offering us, as she imagined, a period of quiet retreat, was simply giving us the chance of three uproarious nights.

I said that before replying I would like to consult my fellow confirmees, and I went off to find Joan and Beatrice. They were the two most notorious and noisy raggers in the House. It seems odd looking back that not for one moment did we so much as seriously discuss accepting Miss Sandys' suggestion. "It would be a ripping rag," said Beatrice, "but it wouldn't be fair." I went back to Miss Sandys and said that we thanked her very much for her offer, but that we preferred to remain in our own dormitories.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

We were to be confirmed . . . and all the while underneath I grappled with doubts. . . . There was nothing new about the doubts; they had first assailed me at the age of eleven and had troubled me off and on ever since. But in the rush of school life they had been put aside for a while, and now Confirmation brought them all back again, and the more poignantly that I had always hoped that somehow it would lay them to rest—that at that religious coming-of-age I should undergo some spiritual experience which would reveal to me a mystery that I had not understood before, which would make it possible, even inevitable, to believe the entire Christian Faith with whole-hearted conviction. In fact, I felt that Confirmation, with all that it entailed, was my last chance to achieve the certainty that meant peace, and I was correspondingly troubled and anxious. For the Christian Faith seemed to me so difficult to feel certain about. Had Christ really ascended to heaven? Had He really been born of the Virgin Mary? . . . Was there really any God at all? Was there really any hereafter at all?

I used to stand and say the Creed and tell myself that I believed it, but in my heart I knew that I did not. Yet disbelief was very painful.

On the whole the authorities of my world were against belief.\* I had great trust in my father's judgment and intelligence, and I was pretty certain of his views on the matter. I had asked him on one occasion whether he thought the whole of the New Testament was true (I knew that even my mother did not believe the whole of the Old), and no shade of the slight embarrassment with which he told me that that was a question I had better ask my mother had been lost on me. Then, again, I felt fairly sure that Aunt Lotty thought that the whole thing was a myth. She had once refused to allow me to read a book about religion which she herself was reading, on the plea that "Your mother would not like it." . . . I had great faith

\* In all the years that I knew her I do not remember that I ever discussed anything approaching religion with Miss Sandys, who was on such matters exceedingly reserved. When I actually sent her this chapter to read, however, some few months before she died, she wrote me a letter from which I cannot believe that she would object to my quoting the following short extract :

"MY DEAR MARGARET,

"I have enjoyed your papers *very* much, especially the account of the walks and talks in the playground : the one on Confirmation is a little more startling—I don't suppose anyone expected you to have such decided views at seventeen! Personally I should have advised you to postpone the ceremony, but I doubt if anyone else in authority would have been of my opinion—thinking probably the laying on of hands by the Bishop would produce the spiritual regeneration. . . . As one grows older one feels more strongly that each individual has a spiritual side which requires help and sustenance, and that is the reason for so many creeds and sects in the world, each one striving to find what satisfies his yearnings most. Christianity is the highest development if fully practised, which it seldom is."

in Aunt Lotty's judgment also, and particularly in her understanding of things spiritual. She had, indeed, taken away some part of that torturing fear of death with which as a child I had been cursed by her common-sense explanation: "It's just like taking off your dress," said Aunt Lotty.

It is true that, having been brought up with a wholesome English awe and respect for Bishops, I would gladly, if I could, have taken the views of a Bishop even against those of my father and aunt, especially since he would have convinced me of what I wanted to believe—and it comforted me considerably to know that Mr. Gladstone believed the whole thing. "If so great a man as that can believe it all . . ." said I to myself. . . .

And yet quite apart from this question of authorities the thing seemed so very difficult to believe positively. It *might* be true. I was no more disposed to a very active disbelief than to a very active belief. Indeed, it seemed to me to be as difficult to be certain one way as the other. The thing, then, might be true—I could see no absolutely final reason why it should not, but neither could I see any reason why it should. My attitude was negative. But that negative attitude tormented me. Over and over and round and round I churned the whole thing in my mind, trying to find a foothold somewhere for certain absolute belief. I wanted—eagerly I wanted—to believe it all. One expected things to be absolute in those days. And indeed, to a child brought up in the late Victorian era, surrounded by the prosaic normal happenings of an established order of civilisation, among people impregnated with the rationalist view not merely in religion but in life, the whole story, as one then understood it, seemed far more impossible than it does to-day. It was against common sense. And common sense

was in those days a secure and abiding rock. "*C'est le sens commun,*" says Anatole France, "*qui donne lieu à tous les faux jugements. Le sens commun nous enseigne que la terre est fixe, que le soleil tourne autour et que les hommes qui vivent aux antipodes marchent la tête en bas. Défiez-vous du bon sens. . . . C'est en son nom qu'on a commis toutes les bêtises et tous les crimes.*" But at sixteen I had not read Anatole France, and, if I had, I imagine that that passage would have passed me by. I might harbour doubts about the Christian Faith; I harboured none as yet about the sanctity of common sense. In my universe most familiar things were still measurable, dependable and absolute.

One speaks of childhood as the time in which belief in hobgoblins and fairies is easy; but the truth is that the rational, cautious child which bases its belief on its own experience finds anything outside the obvious far more difficult to accept then than it does twenty years later, when it has found so much to be true that is not obvious. The world grows more not less mysterious as one grows older. I asked then, of course, for literal truth. The young are very literal, and, indeed, no one had ever suggested to me that a thing might be spiritually without being literally true.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not long before the actual day of Confirmation the local clergyman arranged to see each one of us separately and pray with us in the headmistress's study. Now, the headmistress's study had two glass doors, each of which gave on to a corridor, down which passed many girls. It is true that for this occasion the doors were curtained, but not, as it seemed to me, very adequately, and my chief recollection of that interview is anxiety as to whether through gaps in the curtain it might be possible to catch glimpses of the clergyman and myself kneeling down together on the floor.

In fact, the whole thing was most embarrassing. However, I decided to have one last try to get rid of my doubts. But I felt that Mr. X——, of whom I had no very great opinion, would find it so unspeakably terrible that I should doubt the New Testament that I had not the courage to break it to him that I did. I decided, therefore, to compromise. I told him only that I had difficulty in believing the whole story of Adam and Eve. How oddly works the mind of a human being. I had scarcely a vestige of belief in the story of Adam and Eve. It did not seem to me to be very necessary to believe it. Even my mother, whom I regarded as the final word in orthodoxy, did not entirely accept it. In so far as Mr. X—— had argued seriously in its favour he would merely have shaken still further my regard for any other beliefs which he might hold. But my desperate longing to be convinced, coming up against my horror of shocking a grown-up person, resulted in my asking him to prove to me his faith in a story, proof of his faith in which would merely have convinced me of his incompetence as a guide.

In point of fact Mr. X—— did not do much arguing. He became rather flustered, and finally asked me, a little doubtfully, if it would help me to see the Bishop. The idea of seeing the Bishop impressed me, and gave me a distinct sense of importance, but it also rather terrified me. I could not think that anything I could or could not believe was important enough to see a Bishop about. So, rather, I fancy, to Mr. X——'s relief, I refused the offer of the Bishop . . . and went off and retailed the whole story, including the anxiety about kneeling down, to an appreciative audience in the Boot Room—which, I remember feeling afterwards, was what a nice person would not have done. Looking back, it seems to me odd that I should have made a good

story out of the affair, for I am quite clear that I never mentioned my real doubts and the misery they caused me to a single soul in the school.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of the actual day of the Confirmation no trace remains, except a general impression of white dresses in the church and the brilliant shininess of the Bishop's black boots as I knelt down before him to be blessed. But an odd little incident comes back to me from just afterwards. Easter fell early that year, and we were spending Easter Sunday at school. Miss Sandys sent for me to ask whether we should prefer to go to our first Communion on Easter Sunday at school, or wait till we got home. We consulted together. It did not seem to make much difference, and one of us (I expect it was Beatrice) had the bright idea that we should toss up. Her feeling was that in such a matter the coin would be guided to a right decision. In all reverence, we tossed. So little impression has my first Communion left upon me that I cannot now remember whether the coin fell for school or home. I only know that whichever decision it gave we obeyed it.

●



## CHAPTER VIII

### LEAVING SCHOOL AND COMING OUT

“St. Andrews by the Northern Sea,  
A haunted town it is to me!”

ANDREW LANG.

THE time had come to leave school. I have dim recollections of last talks from mistresses, only one of which, and that clearly the one I could have spared, perversely remains in my mind. It revolved round the iniquities of drinking, smoking and gambling. Those were the sins, the deadly sins, against which in after life we must guard. I thought then as I think now, that the chances of many of us taking to heavy gambling or to drinking were remote, and that smoking after all was not so very wrong. In fact, I felt that the lecture was beside the point and a little inadequate and that that mistress had missed her opportunity. (It might perhaps have a shade more meaning to-day; but, after all, drinking and gambling are merely the symptoms—not the disease itself.) I felt it strongly, partly because I was wrought up at leaving and was disappointed at having had to listen to something that seemed to me meaningless when I had hoped for something interesting; partly because, though I knew the wrong thing when I heard it, I had no understanding of, and made no allowance for, the difficulties which a shy and reserved woman might find in the path of saying the right thing.

I reported the lecture to my House-mistress. “Do you,” I commented, innocent-eyed, but knowing full well that in the holidays she occasionally smoked herself (thirty years

ago that was something quite interesting to know), "think smoking so very wrong, Miss Sandys?" This, as I perfectly well knew, put Miss Sandys, who was always truthful with us, but could not be disloyal to another mistress, into a bit of a quandary. "Not very," she replied, "but not very attractive perhaps. . . ." Well, I could scarcely, in the circumstances, have expected her to take that opportunity of confessing to her own smoking habits.

Miss Sandys' own leaving talk did not deal as much with the difficulties of after life as I had hoped it would. I was not very sure myself what the difficulties of after life were going to be, but I hoped they would turn out to be exciting, and I was, of course, most anxious to visualise and dramatise them. It was Miss Sandys' habit, however, to deal with difficulties when, not before, they arose. One sentence only of that last interview can I still remember. I suppose it went home. I was presently to go up to college. "You will enjoy the life, Margaret," said she. "I am not sure," the blue eyes twinkled, "whether you will enjoy the work."

\* \* \* \* \*

I was leaving school. I had spent, and I knew it then as well as I know it now, some gloriously happy and unrepeatable years there. I made no doubt—I was young, and I have always been an optimist—that equally happy years were awaiting me in the world outside; but these particular years were over, they had been all too short, and I could not bear to think that they would never come again.

Not that I wanted to stay on. I knew that my time for change had come. I was already getting too old for school. But I had lived every minute of my life there, and it was hard to leave it. I was sad, troubled, shaken out of myself. I made friends with girls I had disliked all through my school life because they were leaving too, and they minded

too. I remembered to myself all the school things I had taken pleasure in. Most of those memories have faded. Oddly, two remain, both, for some reason, connected with flowers: one is of the pale purple lilac bush which spread out over one corner of the path leading through the playground from House to school (it has gone now, some idiot cut it down). Every time—cutting close round the corner and brushing against it on purpose for the pleasure of the scent and the feel of the thing as I hurried over to school—I passed that bush in lilac-time, its lower branches weighed to the ground with heavy blossom, I used to murmur to myself a line out of “The Geisha”: “It’s good to be alive sometimes.” To this day pale purple lilac always brings back to me that old Geisha song.

The other memory concerns some Madonna lilies—a lovely big group of them which I had the year before grown in my garden. (Anyone in the school who applied for it might own their own little square patch of garden. Mine, which backed on to one of the old grey walls, was a joy to me when—intermittently—I remembered to work in it.) These lilies had come to perfection on the very last evening of the summer term, and I had had to leave them behind. I could not bear to think of them wasting themselves alone, with no one to see them, and yet it seemed dreadful to cut them. In the long after-glow of the northern summer evening I had debated the matter for some while. Finally I had made my decision, cut them every one, and taken the whole armful to Miss Sandys, who was staying on. The thing had stayed in my mind partly for the beauty of the lilies and the difficulty of decision, partly, I expect, because I was a very shy child. I had never before given flowers to Miss Sandys. It was not a thing we did, and it had been a big effort to screw myself to the point of offering them.

I went to look at things for the last time. I climbed the steps of the old ruined tower set in one corner of the great wall which gave such a good view of the big cricket field and the sea and the lovely west cliffs. I went down to the end of the old grey quay by the side of the tiny harbour and looked out over the sea, and up to the land where St. Regulus and the ruined cathedral stood out against a pale blue sky. I walked far along the west cliffs, that favourite walk of all, beyond the Spindle nearly to the Buddha rock, and, looking east, I saw St. Andrews blocked black against the pale grey hills beyond, like an etching come to life: the square tower of St. Regulus, the twin towers of the ruined cathedral, and running down from them the prickly profile of the town itself, ending in the sheer drop of the castle rock into the sea. That is one of the most beautiful views I know.

In one sense life, as I knew it, seemed to me to be coming to an end. Not, as I have said, that I was afraid of the future. Some of those who were leaving were frightened, I remember. They seemed to realise something of what life would be like in the outside, or rather in the very much inside, world of the drawing-room to which we were most of us going, but I was not. I never am. I laughed their fears to scorn. Even now, when I ought to be old enough to know better, I almost always expect the months just round the corner to be full of excitement and success; and in those days no colours were too bright to paint the grown-up years ahead.

Yet I might have realised what they were going to mean, for already the shades of the drawing-room were beginning to close around me. There had been that matter of corsets only the year before, when my mother had come in to see

me in bed one night during the holidays and broken it to me that in future I should have to wear stays. And I had wept bitter, though not rebellious tears. For it was the common lot. Some might have put off the evil day for a year or two longer, but I was a fat child and had not the figure to wait. Oh, how I hated those great box-like, restraining things! Stays in those days were a great deal worse than they are now; up to the bust and halfway down to the knees, and well whaleboned—not perhaps mine so much, however. At least, not after the first few days. I bought the shortest I could find—and always the first day I got into them the side bones broke, and I took them out. Then at short intervals all the others went. By the end of a month few, if any, were left. Only the front ones had to remain. All the same I hated them. I got out of them when I was twenty-one, but when I became engaged I put them on again. I only paid a year's deference to my husband's wishes, however. The stays were too uncomfortable to be borne. Within three months of marriage I cast them for good and all. Comfort has always stood high on my list of necessities.

Oddly enough, whilst I hated putting on stays, I was distinctly proud and pleased to do up my very unmanageable hair, though goodness knows that the bun, dragging on a couple of pins as it almost always did, made one uncomfortable enough. I suppose that the difference lay in the fact that the hair was the outward and visible sign of maturity, whereas the stays did not show.

But I was not the kind of child to recognise shadows whose portent I disliked. No, the trouble during those last weeks at school did not lie with the future, but only with the intolerable idea of giving up that very perfect

present. Again and again during the long spring evenings we strolled round and about the big playground bidding good-bye to the cricket field, the old walls, the hospice garden, the ruined turret at the corner, and even the gasometer.

The last Sunday of the term I went for a long walk with Prid. At the end of the golf links a storm was brewing. Great thunder clouds rolled up across the estuary, and, looking at them, I suddenly decided that my future life would be as thrilling and dramatic as that sky. I confided my presentiment to Prid and she appeared to be impressed, which was satisfactory, for Prid was usually as little impressed by my heroics as I by hers. But even as I spoke I wondered to myself whether I really had a presentiment or whether I was just showing off. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

. . . And so after those years of full and happy activity I went home to be a young lady. . . . Well, as I have said, that did not worry me, for after all that was the common lot. I had no idea that I was in any way unfitted either by character or training for the rôle which for the first few years of my grown-up life I must try to play. On the contrary, I rather looked forward to it—when I was young I always looked forward to parties, and that regardless of the fact that I very seldom enjoyed them.

It was actually some alleviation of the sadness of the break with the life I had loved that I was immediately to be plunged into the gaiety of a London season. True, I should not myself have thought of wanting to go through a season if my mother had not felt it to be her duty to make me do so. My own contribution to my future was the demand for college. But I had no grudge against the fates that made

some preliminary social life inevitable. Yet there can seldom have been a young woman less fitted for the rôle of a young lady at home than I was. Independent, unadaptable, awkward, speechlessly shy, anxious to discuss everything interesting under the sun (a *débutante* in a London ball-room got few opportunities for that), but easily bored by talk that seemed to me pointless, or by people who seemed to me dull. One might as well have tried to put a carthorse into a drawing-room as turn me into a young lady at home. Yet neither my mother nor I myself were aware at the time that there could be any difficulty in the matter. In those days a young lady was a young lady; the idea that some female material could never be fashioned into this particular shape had occurred to very few.

It would indeed be hard to saddle my school with all my drawing-room failings, several of which—notably the shyness and the lack of adaptability—it had, in fact, done something towards alleviating. But it is true that at St. Leonards we, or at least some of us, had—though neither our school, our House-mistress nor ourselves were completely aware of it—been educated for something more than a young lady's life. We had been given our chance to drink at St. Leonards Well, and for those who thirsted the waters of freedom lay there. We had learnt a freedom of initiative, had been allowed a freedom of mental development that no young lady can safely be allowed; and in my case, of course, the freedom of thought and conversation at home had enormously reinforced school. I had been allowed—nay, I had actually been taught—to think. Instincts and desires had come alight for which the life I was to be offered allowed no scope. In the years of bored inaction that lay ahead the sense of frustration was choking. Yet neither we nor our parents had the least idea what was wrong. "Why have

women passion, intellect, moral activity—these three—and a place in society where no one of the three can be exercised?” wrote Florence Nightingale in 1852. It was still true fifty years later.

It was a long time before I was so happy again as I had been at school.

\* \* \* \* \*

I had left school at the end of the April term. In London in May I Came Out. That is to say that for three months I went, accompanied by my mother, to a dance most nights of the week, varied by an occasional political At Home. And that I accompanied her to afternoon parties, sometimes small, for talk only; sometimes large, when people played or sang to us; from my point of view the only alleviation at either was the tea-table. But even the supper (although, thank God, I have always been greedy) failed to alleviate the tedium of the dances. Every night my mother and I would have an argument as to what time it was possible to go home—before supper, I implored: but my mother was firm; when one took a girl to a dance it was customary to stay until supper was over, and until supper was over she would stay. It was true that eating food at that time of night always gave her a headache next day. But that consideration probably, if anything, made her firmer. She is a woman with a magnificently puritan conscience, and the fact that she suffered for doing her duty only made her the more determined to do it.

I was not the kind of young woman who gets on easily with strangers, for, as I have said, I was terribly, devastatingly shy (slight shyness may be attractive, but a creature so stiff with shyness that her every attribute, physical, mental and emotional, functions as if it were mixed with plaster-of-



Paris is not), incapable of so much as a sentence of small-talk; incapable, in other words, of carrying on for one minute a conversation in which I was not seriously interested. Put me into a room alone with one person who was prepared to talk about something I considered interesting and I could, after the first few painful minutes, become completely at my ease and ask nothing better for hours together. But put me into a London ball-room amongst crowds of people and expect me to make light conversation for ten minutes at a time, and I became an inarticulate lump of diffidence. The result of this was that I usually had no idea of how to get on with the kind of young men who were to be found in London ball-rooms. The men who found me attractive were seldom or never London products. "What *can* I talk to my partners about?" I inquired. "Oh, politics," replied my mother placidly, "or the weather." But she, who has, in fact, considerable social gifts and is never at a loss for conversation with a stranger, was probably not altogether capable of appreciating the difficulties of the large, shy, awkward duckling at her side.

Small wonder that the myriads of partners who were introduced seldom came back a second time, and that during those first London seasons a goodly number of my dances were spent sitting against the wall beside my mother. My difficulties were enhanced by an unfortunate peculiarity which has dogged me all my life. I never could recognise faces. I might have danced with a man only the night before, but I didn't know him from Adam when I saw him at the next ball, so that I was seldom able to bow to any of my partners. The inability to recognise people has always haunted me, and has continually got me into difficulties. At that particular period it made doubly certain the certainty that I should spend a considerable part of the evening

at my mother's side. I remember one young man who was a great help to me because he had flaming red hair—no one could have missed him anywhere. Whenever we met I bowed with the assurance that came of knowing that I was making no mistake, and he would come up and ask for a couple of dances; but as he was much in request (as were, indeed, all the young men) the dances were often far down the programme. I sat patiently against the wall till they came on, deprived of even so much as the excuse of an empty programme for going home before supper.

There was a middle-aged bachelor who could be counted on for dances. His age probably helped me to distinguish him from the rest, so that I learnt the look of him quickly and was able to recognise him again. He aimed, unsuccessfully, I imagine, at being a social leader. He had a tendency to discuss matters of culture and uplift. I remember his assuring me in a tone which was a nice blend of the sonorous and the sentimental that "the flame of every soul burns upwards—it must not be impeded by atmospheric disturbances." The phrase stuck in my mind, it—and the way he said it—expressed the type of fool he was so perfectly. I despised him utterly for a snob and a poseur, but since partners were scarce one had to make do with what came along. Besides, I got very considerable amusement out of him. I encouraged the poor man to make a fool of himself; looking, no doubt, all the while as gentle, demure and sympathetic as intense shyness can make a young woman appear.

Another trait detracted in those early days from my chances of enjoying my partners. If by any chance I did find a person whom I thought interesting or exciting I showed it by avoiding him as if he had the plague. I do not quite know on what such odd behaviour was based,

but it was far stronger than I was—I had to do it. It took me many years to conquer this ridiculous weakness. Indeed, I cannot honestly say it is completely conquered yet. The result was, naturally, that I seldom kept an interesting partner. My only chance was not to discover he was interesting until I had already learnt how to talk to him (although even then the discovery was apt to throw me back into shyness and avoidance), or to find a man so persevering that he was prepared to continue in spite of the utmost cold discouragement. But such people are rare.

When I look back now I feel rather sorry for my partners. I remember sitting stiffly beside one youth, who was, I suppose, as shy as myself, through a whole dance interval, during which neither of us spoke one word. If that was a record it did not win on other dance intervals by very much. “*Do* have some champagne,” begged one young man at supper; “it *might* make you *talk*!” But I knew better. “It wouldn’t make me talk,” I returned; “it always sends me to sleep.” However, in point of fact I did talk to that particular partner. He must have been of a persevering turn of mind, and finally chanced on the rival merits of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, whereupon I woke up; and when he followed that up by attacking the Socialist creed, which at that time I distinctly favoured, I became so interested that we were still in the midst of a long and heated argument when “God save the King” came at the end of the dance, and they had to search the garden for us, to tell us it was time to go home. There must, when I come to think of it, have been lighter moments in the course of that particular evening, for I remember that he taught me to smoke—a thing strictly forbidden at home—but I do not suppose there were many.

Such a complete social failure must have been rather



[Photo by Cosway]

MARGARET HAIG THOMAS, AGED TWENTY

1

trying to a mother with social gifts, but I do not remember that my mother ever appeared to be aware of my deficiencies, or other than placidly assured that to sit beside one's daughter for hours against a wall every evening was the normal expectation for a chaperoning mother. The maternal instinct is capable of producing such amazing self-deception that it is possible that it hid even the bald facts of our sad situation from her.

Curiously enough, I cannot remember that sitting against the wall caused me myself the least sense of that humiliation that one is always told it does cause to the young women who suffer it. Since I was in most ways both ambitious and sensitive, this seems queer, and I am at a loss to account for it. It may have been partly due to the fact that in those days, when it was rather the fashion for young men to despise dancing, there were usually a good number of young women sitting alongside me—partly also, I think, to the fact that in my country-bred heart I despised what I called London young men, suspecting them of being soft and unathletic and affected. In my view the really worthwhile young man, not being forced, as was the young woman, to go through the gaities of a London Season, would certainly avoid it. It might be a shade less boring to dance than to sit idle, since the actual dancing I rather enjoyed, but I did not regard it as any credit to me to be chosen by men whom I rather despised. Also, since I was not at the dances from my own choice, I did not feel personally responsible for what happened at them.

On rare occasions when cousins appeared at the balls things were, of course, entirely different. Cousins were people one could not fail to recognise. Cousins were people one could talk to. Cousins were people one really liked. Those were the nights when all went merry as a marriage

bell, but those were also the nights when my mother always seemed to want to leave early. Whether she had the puritan feeling that when the social life ceased to be a stern martyrdom there was something wrong with it, or whether she felt that she had not taken all the trouble to put me through a London Season merely to see me dance with cousins, I cannot say. It is true that the cousins were all detrimentals, but it is difficult to credit my mother with being actuated by so mundane a consideration as that. Moreover, it could scarcely have been any inherent objection to cousins, for the cousins used to come in shoals to stay with us at Llanwern; the house was always full of them. It is possible, of course, that she really wanted to leave at the same time as usual, only that what seemed so intolerably late on other nights seemed ridiculously early when one was enjoying oneself.

Cousins in point of fact were uncommonly apt to get one into trouble. There was that affair at Henley, which has its interest to-day, I think, as showing how oddly unfree a grown-up person still was only a quarter of a century ago. Every year we went down to Henley. That was the one function of the season that I was perfectly certain of enjoying. I came of a rowing family. A bachelor uncle of ours lived at Henley, and most of the rest of the family made his rooms their headquarters during the Regatta. There we all met and lunched, and from there, in congenially assorted groups, we went off to find punts or canoes, or what not, from which to watch the races. But one year—it must, I suppose, have been my second season—an acquaintance of my mother's, a Mrs. Elliott, whom, as it happened, I regarded as "societified" and heartily disliked, who was taking her own daughters down to Henley, asked

me to join her party. It meant missing one of the three days of the season which I really enjoyed. It meant spending a whole day amongst strangers without even my mother for support; it meant spending it with a woman whom I actively disliked. I was horrified. But my mother wanted me to go. We argued it out. "She's only asked me," said I, "because she wants to get her stepson married, and she thinks I'd make a good match for him. And you know when he stayed with us at Whitsuntide it was Violet, not me, whom he was interested in. And even if it had been me, though he's quite nice, I shouldn't dream of marrying him; he's far too old. So it's sheer waste even from her own point of view, her asking me to Henley. She'd much better get someone whom he really might marry, and not waste her time over me." The whole of which speech rather shocked my mother. Young women should not in her view suppose that anyone had any matrimonial *arrière-pensées*, and if they did, they shouldn't refer to it in so crude a manner. As for my disliking the woman, she'd always been very pleasant to me, and—a grievance of long standing—why *would* I take such strong dislikes to people I scarcely knew? It was ridiculous. In the end I had a sudden fit of conscience and gave in. (It's an odd thing that all my life whenever I have done a thing I thought I ought to do through a fit of conscience it has always turned out to be a mistake.) It was some consolation that that year, for the first time, I was to be allowed to stay for the fireworks in the evening. For these I was to leave Mrs. Elliott's party and rejoin that of my uncle; and since my mother was not staying down late, I was to come up to Town under the chaperonage of an aunt.

It was arranged that I should meet Mrs. Elliott at eleven a.m. under the clock at Paddington. My mother, accom-



panied by a niece (the Violet in question), was coming down a little later, to lunch with my uncle. At eleven o'clock to the second I stood in all my best muslins under the clock at Paddington—but no Mrs. Elliott was there. Three minutes past eleven—five minutes past—and still she was not there. I began to grow impatient. At six minutes past, two cousins came by on their way to the Henley train and stopped to inquire what I was doing under the clock. I explained. Six whole minutes late . . . it almost seemed as if she could not be coming. “You can’t wait for her for ever,” said the cousins; “why not come along with us?” Why not indeed? I went along with them, and down to Henley and into my uncle’s rooms. “Why not,” said the cousins, “come out on the river with us until lunch-time?” I myself felt this to be the safest plan, for my conscience was not entirely at ease. I had a suspicion that my mother would feel that six minutes was scarcely long enough to have waited under that clock. I had it in my bones, in fact, that it would be wise to be out of the way when my mother arrived at my uncle’s lodgings. I preferred that she should hear what had happened before we actually met. I wrote a note, addressed it to my mother and left it on my uncle’s mantelpiece. After all these years I can still remember its opening phrase—“That beast Mrs. Elliott,” it began, “never turned up at Paddington. . . .”

Now it appears that my mother, following close upon my heels, had reached Paddington herself by a quarter past eleven. There she had found Mrs. Elliott and her party in some distress. They had arrived some minutes ago and there was no sign of me. Together my mother and Mrs. Elliott and the daughters had searched the station. Mrs. Elliott, a little tart, had suggested that I had done exactly what, in fact, I had. My mother had replied with entire

conviction that her daughter would never dream of behaving in so thoughtless and mannerless a fashion. Finally, after spending a good half-hour in their search, they had decided to proceed to Henley and to come to my uncle's lodgings so that my mother might prove to Mrs. Elliott that I was not there. On my uncle's mantelpiece they had found my note, and standing beside Mrs. Elliott my mother had opened it. . . .

Small wonder that by the time I came back from the river I was not in high favour. Sparks flew from both sides, and my mother ended by telling me that as a punishment for my ill behaviour she would refuse to allow me to stay for the fireworks, and that I must come home at six o'clock with my cousin Violet and herself. I was furious. To be punished as if I were still a small girl outraged every scrap of dignity I possessed. Yet to stay down in defiance of my mother's wishes was impossible, since my uncle who was my host could scarcely be expected to keep me if she forbade it. I was determined, however, to take some revenge. The revenge I decided upon as adequate marks, it seems to me, the big change between those semi-Victorian days and 1933. I would go home, but without my mother, and, what is more, I would travel without either a married woman or a male escort. On Henley day such a thing was unheard of. Moreover, I would not go back to our Westminster flat till after nine o'clock, so that my mother would be really frightened and picture me roaming alone and unprotected through London at an hour when no well-to-do girl was allowed out by herself. But even in my anger so daring an idea as travelling entirely alone did not occur to me. I picked out Nina Jameson, a kindly cousin, and persuaded her to come with me. We left without saying a word to anyone else, and having reached London, Nina and

I roamed about Hyde Park until after nine o'clock. I took a hansom home. I expected to find my mother anxious, wrought-up and indignant, and to have the luxury of continuing the furious quarrel that we had started that morning. I had, however, reckoned without my father. He very often had the knack of knowing with what object one had done things, and of defeating one by refusing to react in the way one had foreseen. On this occasion I walked in to find a perfectly friendly, peaceful home. My dinner had been kept hot for me; no comment of any kind was made. I was not so much as asked what I had been doing. My plan was a complete fiasco. That, perhaps, is why I remember the whole of that queer little Victorian incident so clearly to this day.

\* \* \* \* \*

The curious thing is that, looking back, I do not remember that I particularly resented being made to crawl, or perhaps more accurately allowing myself to be dragged, through the social round I have described. I do not remember dreading any of the dances beforehand, or feeling any more resentment when I got there than was implied in boredom and sleepiness (and as for the sleepiness, that I felt even when I had a programme full of partners; I used to take quantities of coffee to try to keep awake). I had no theories against the social life, and I had quite the usual share of romance. The partners I met might be dull, but the partners whom I continued to expect were of the most thrilling . . . that, I suppose, was what prevented me from going on strike. And although I do not think that I had any special talent for dressing, I certainly enjoyed choosing the quantities of clothes which were then considered necessary for a London Season. Indeed, I can even now remember in detail a

number of those first grown-up dresses. My first evening dress, for instance, of string-coloured net with long net sleeves and a net fill-in which came just short of the collar-bone, in which I felt so naked. I can still remember creeping—shy but thrilled—downstairs and dodging behind some pots of palms as I came into the drawing-room, full of hot embarrassment, but much pleasure. And there was a cherry-red muslin—with a bunch of cherries to match in a big straw hat I wore with it—which I particularly fancied myself in. And a very pale pink *mousseline-de-soie* in which someone said of me in surprise that I looked quite grown-up, adding several further, even more flattering, remarks which were passed on to me by a kind cousin and enshrined themselves permanently in my memory.

However, the Seasons only lasted for three years; they came to a natural end when I went up to Oxford, and when, after a comparatively short interval, I came down again, I firmly refused to resume them. By that time I was quite clear about their misery. Yet I do not remember that even then I consciously criticised a system which was responsible for persuading a particularly affectionate and conscientious mother (who, if left to please herself, would have desired to spend three-quarters of her time either painting miniatures or working in her garden, and the other quarter in an old furniture shop) that she could best do her duty by martyrising herself into dragging a bored and not even socially successful daughter through a series of aimless and useless functions. A system which hypnotised a perfectly intelligent, though perhaps rather naive young woman, already anxious to investigate most accepted notions impersonally and dispassionately, into acceding without question to indulgence in this odd form of occupation, which in fact she was hating so much. One knows now that the idea at the back of the

system is marriage. But although I was then much pre-occupied with the whole question of love and marriage, I do not remember being particularly conscious of the connection at the time. And I rather doubt whether my mother was. She would have thought it, I suspect, a little indecent. Her sole concern was to do for her daughter what had been done for her, and what other mothers did for theirs.

## CHAPTER IX

### HOME, COLLEGE AND MARRIAGE

“Women dream till they have no longer the strength to dream. . . . Later in life they neither desire nor dream, neither of activity, nor of love, nor of intellect.”—*Cassandra* (FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE).

THOSE early years, coming out years, were not, of course, entirely occupied by the London Season. Most of each year, except for May, June and July, was spent at Llanwern. It is true that invitations were apt to come from people we had met in London, asking me to stay at house-parties for festivities of various kinds, but unless these were from relations I utterly refused, in spite of my mother's pressure, to accept them. Going out in London, said I, was one thing. I had bargained for that. But going all alone to stay with strangers was another, and a thing not to be borne.

House-parties at Llanwern, composed chiefly of cousins, were, of course, quite different. I enjoyed those. There was a pleasant informality about them. The house held some twenty visitors. We had these parties pretty often—the very big ones at least twice a year, in January and September, always on the pretext of a dance. Those dances were great fun. We all knew each other well. We prepared feverishly for the dance—in winter it was usually a fancy-dress one—for some days beforehand, and asked all our neighbours to it. But I do not remember the neighbours very much at the actual dances. For the most part, we of the house-party all danced with each other. One Christmas, I remember, my father, in an unsuccessful attempt to teach us courtesy, forbade the house-party to book up their

programmes with each other in advance before the outside visitors arrived. However, no one paid the least attention to him. And, remarking philosophically that it was a great mistake and very foolish ever to give a command one could not enforce, he gave up further effort.

But it was not only on the night of the big dance that we danced. Every night we danced. During the day we would go for picnics or drive the ponies about the country or sit on the steps talking. And, whenever these house-parties happened, and for so long as they lasted, all the girls used to sit up in their bedrooms till two or three in the morning, talking and talking and talking. One got down between ten and eleven for breakfast, and was languid next morning, of course. But since there was nothing in particular to do that did not matter. It was, I suppose, an instinctive way of using up surplus energy.

When I was alone (though it was rare to be without some cousins in the house), and indeed at all times, I read and read and read. Largely mediocre novels, interspersed with some poetry. Some reading also of slightly heavier calibre: Stevenson, Carlyle, Froude, a little history—a come-by-chance hotch-potch miscellany of reading. I did not read much political stuff. Politics interested me, they always had (they were talked half the time at home, since my father was in Parliament); but, though I considered them and puzzled about them a good deal, I did not, for all their fascination, attempt to study them. What was the use of taking the trouble to know and understand something in which one could have neither part nor lot? How, indeed, failing the right to practise politics, could one ever really hope to know them except superficially from the outside? And to know a thing from the outside never interested me. It is true that some of the girls I knew worked mildly in subordinate

capacities for the National Liberal Federation or the Primrose League, or helped their fathers or husbands. But I never had much use for acting as a substitute for someone else, or in a permanently subordinate capacity. No, politics were not for my touching.

I was still in those years completely adolescent—I matured, as the protected woman so often does (when she matures at all), very late—and my thoughts and dreams and reading reflected my immaturity. If I had been given the next step I needed after leaving school, I should no doubt have responded to it by growing up. But fate had thrown me into an environment of which I could make nothing. Social custom asked of me that I should fit into a shape which could not hold the fully grown person, and I instinctively responded to it by curling further back into my adolescent shell. I was thinking a bit, of course, and mildly puzzling. There were a good many things in life that seemed painful and frightening. For one thing those early agonising thoughts about the nature of reality, the inexplicability of time *und so weiter*, which during the years at St. Leonards had completely stopped, had come back with renewed force. But they were no longer the only ones that troubled me. New and rather more practical worries about life as I saw and read of it had come to join them. I had then, as I have had all my life, the kind of mind that takes a knotty puzzle of a thing that worries it into its jaws and ever and again churns it over and over and over until finally (sometimes, not, of course, always)—it may be many years later—the explanation that satisfies it dawns.

Oddly, one of the things that was puzzling me then—and it seems queer that I should have troubled myself about it when I was only twenty—was the question of the middle-



aged woman. Why was it that life for a woman was over when it was only halfway through? Why was it that in men the keen enjoyment of life went on until they died, but that with women all the zest seemed to ebb away and they stopped really caring about their own lives and their own enjoyment after they were about forty? And they became a little deprecatory too, a little apologetic for their own continued existence. It seemed to me as if a woman might just as well *die* at forty.

Would that happen to me? I was a young woman who, in some things, looked far ahead. It seemed rather dreadful that one should have to live a whole half of one's life when life had lost its point, without any real zest of enjoyment for it.

And it was not only that. Women over forty seemed to be butts for all kinds of rather unpleasant humour. They were fair game for sneers. Everyone seemed to find them comic, and dowdy and unattractive. Often they were pictured as being physically undignified and repulsive, and almost a little obscene. It seemed fair game to make jokes displaying them as still desperately wanting men to make love to them, and making ugly, undignified advances which were repulsed with loud laughter. But they were equally despised if they made none. There was no escape that way. Then they were pictured as soured old maids who had come to hate all men because no man had ever wanted them.

And there was another thing. What they said and did never had, never could have, any importance. Always they were pictured as completely brainless. In women brains, apparently, ceased to function at forty. One found it emphasised in proverbs and phrases—"Silly old women," "Grandmotherly legislation." One found this brand of humour not only in crude form in the Gilbert and Sullivan

plays and the H. G. Wells novels and in all the ephemeral host of their lesser imitators (as one finds it still to-day in A. P. Herbert, Evelyn Waugh, Beverley Nichols, etc.), but even, as I gradually realised, though in less crude form, in the plays and novels and cartoons of the artists who knew—and minded—whether their wit was in good taste or not. One even found it, if one looked closely, reflected in more veiled and courteous form in the attitude of the people one knew towards middle-aged women—in the things people said to and about them, and in the things they left unsaid.

It was worse when they were spinsters (that was one reason why I wanted so passionately to marry) but even if one married one was a long way from escaping it entirely. It was horrible, gruesome. And the worst of it was there seemed to be truth in it. It was not merely that the middle-aged women lost zest for life—they did seem also to become more silly, more brainless, as they grew older. They became unattractive and dull in a way that men certainly did not. I did not, it is true, see many of them running after men. But brainless, silly, dull, drab, dowdy, purposeless and largely useless to themselves and the world? Yes, that, on the whole, they were. There were exceptions, of course—many of them. No one could accuse Miss Sandys of being deprecating or dowdy or unattractive. No one could accuse Aunt Lotty, or indeed any of my aunts, of lacking zest for life. Why were these different? That was odd too. The whole thing was puzzling. And it was painful. Round and about I turned it in my mind, hoping to ease the discomfort. But it was a number of years before I hit on the many-rooted explanation.

Some young women would have felt—indeed, one still sees a good many who quite obviously, pathetically, and rather feverishly do feel—that the best answer was to hurry

to make hay whilst the sun shone. But I have always hated hurrying. Nor could I in my youth ever find happiness in any condition which I did not believe to be permanent. The thought of the coming despised forties could spoil my twenties for me. (I am not, I may say, defending this peculiarity as a wise or reasonable attitude of mind; I am merely recording it.)

And there were other things in the attitude of society towards the unmarried middle-aged woman that I could not bear. The assumption that she no longer had the right to a life of her own, for example. When, after my grandmother's death, the majority of the family took it for granted that because Aunt Lotty was unmarried she would naturally continue indefinitely to live all the year round at Peth Ithon, even though she hated doing it, I saw red. Much redder, I think, than she did herself, for she, after all, had been brought up in the generation that accepted these things.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

During those early years I spent much time in walking and driving all over the country. Soon after I grew up I learned how to drive a car and acquired a second-hand one of my own, which my parents allowed me to drive about alone at all hours of the day. In those days, even that made for more freedom than many young women possessed. On the other hand, I was never allowed to stay the night away alone. I remember on one occasion when with an unmarried cousin, who must have been thirty at the time, I went for a few days' motoring tour which included stopping at one or two hotels, we were made to take a stable-boy with us to act as chaperone. That, though I laughed, irritated me a little, but I knew very well that given the

place in the world into which I had been born—and I was then imaginatively aware of no other—I was on the whole lucky. There was Ena Dalloway, for example. She was over thirty, but she was not allowed to drive in a hansom cab, and if she went out alone in a four-wheeler a messenger-boy was sent for and put to ride on the box-seat beside the cabby to protect her. Or take Maude Daventry, who married at twenty-five and looked forward to the wedding for that, among other liberties, she would after marriage be allowed to read Conan Doyle's "The White Company." These were certainly extreme instances, but they were not so very extreme, as anyone who has read E. M. Delafield's perfect picture of those days, "Thank Heaven Fasting," will realise.

Often I would lie awake night after night till two or three in the morning telling myself some thrilling serial story, which would go on for a week or more, its situations growing more and more feverish and hectic as it progressed, until, suddenly exhausted, I lost interest in it. Another way of using up surplus energy. For the rest there was amazingly little to do.

Other girls of my age and period occupied themselves, or tried to, in various ways. Some with little social rounds of bridge parties, tea parties, tennis parties, hockey parties, small dances, with here and there a little hunting. I tried all those things too, of course, and though I would probably not have put it so strongly at the time, disliked them all except the hockey, and sometimes the hunting. Other young women did a little gentle social work in their local villages—ran branches of the Girls' Friendly Society or the Mothers' Union; superintended village treats, visited the cottages; worked mildly, in fact, at all the equivalents of to-day's Girl

Guides and Women's Institutes. In those days it was regarded as the business of "the gentry" to run these parish affairs, and there was a considerable amount of self-satisfaction to be derived out of patronising one's poorer neighbours. That at least was how for the most part it seemed to me, a mixture of inventing work to make themselves feel busy and getting pleasure out of patronising people just as good as themselves. I do not know that I was quite fair to the work. But since I saw it from that angle it was not surprising that it provided me with no outlet.

A third group made life tolerable for themselves by a series of mildish flirtations—I found these entertaining to watch, but I had not very much desire to emulate them. I was a romantic young woman. I was prepared to believe that one deep and lasting love could make anyone completely happy, could even fill all the interstices caused by complete lack of any useful occupation or purpose in life. All the novels I read told me that—most novels did tell one that in those days—and I supposed it must be true. But the very belief in such a doctrine precluded the belief that one could find sufficient sustenance in a series of flirtations, no one of which was supposed, either by oneself or the other party, to be anything of permanent importance. I watched and commented, laughed and argued, but I only occasionally, and that to a very mild degree, copied. And in so far as I did copy, my attitude usually took the form of a slightly tepid (though privately much flattered) acceptance of some young man's admiration rather than of any very active participation on my own part. I do not doubt that in this as in various other ways my mother's puritan upbringing had had its effect on my practice even more than on my theory.

Though I did not know what was wrong, I was miserable

during those early, futile, unoccupied years. I am, in fact, made on rather a contradictory but not, I think, an uncommon pattern. Lack of a definite occupation entailing hard work and constant thought invariably induces in me very quickly the most violent and uncontrollable series of depressions. When my engine ran free it ground wretchedness, but it was some years before cause and effect dawned on me. On the other hand, I was naturally lazy. I was not of the kind that could find work or make it where there was none. I had to be given an uncommonly good reason before I was prepared to work sooner than idle. I had a perfect horror of being busy for no reason. The end had to be absolutely worth while before I would bestir myself to work at the means.

At ten I had wanted to be Prime Minister of England, a famous writer, and the mother of twelve children. But I was no less suggestible than the average. By the time I was twenty I had cut my hopes according to my cloth. A thousand subtle influences of environment had done their work, the cramping mould of things-as-they-are had closed around me, and I had conformed to pattern. I no longer thought consciously of any future save love and marriage. In the eyes of everyone around me that was the one path of self-fulfilment. I had an inexhaustible capacity for dreaming. But I had to dream dreams that might come true, so I dreamt only of red roses and romance, and (the one bit of the ten-year-old dream still left intact) . . . flocks of children. Dreams, in fact, which normally should have occupied one quarter or so of my dreaming time were by the pressure of circumstances forced into occupying the whole of it, and the dreaming time itself, which in a normally busy person would have been squeezed into a precious five minutes or so here and there, stretched and

stretched itself until at times it came to occupy half my days.

True, I was still determined on college, but that, I think, must have been merely a hang-over from the earlier period of my ambition. Certainly I had no notion of making any further use of my education when I had got it. On the contrary, I thought that girls who said they meant to work afterwards, when they need not, were rather priggish. The "done" thing was to live at home and do nothing but amuse oneself indefinitely. It was, of course, the idea of marriage in the background that made such an idea for one instant tolerable.

And not so very much in the background. By the time I went up to Somerville I was already more than half in love. That, when I look back upon it now, appears to me to have been almost entirely the effect of suggestion. It seems to me that at twenty-one I was emotionally still undeveloped. Left to myself I doubt whether I should have been likely to fall in love till the very late twenties. But all outlets for self-fulfilment, for vitality, for energy, for dreams, were closed save one. I had a good deal of vitality, and although I was quite unaware of it then, a very considerable amount of ambition. I wanted, badly wanted, to fulfil myself. I thought it would be *dreadful* never to marry—every book I read, every person I heard told me so. The one real success for a woman was marriage, and I was all for being a success—though I should indeed have been shocked had anyone told me that anything so mundane was what I desired. The difficulty of the thing lay in the fact that, whilst I so urgently desired to marry, I was equally determined not to marry without being desperately in love. However, imagination can do much.

What an infantile, superstitious young savage three-

quarters of me still was—but need one be so very proud because to-day one has reduced that three-quarters to one? I had been a bridesmaid three times, and there was a saying, “Three times a bridesmaid never a bride,” that in depressed moods used to frighten me terribly. Would the curse work? Would I never marry? The superstition went on to say that if one acted as a bridesmaid seven times the curse lifted. But that would take a long time to compass and might never happen. In point of fact I never got past the three. Out of that two things arose. When I did marry I pledged myself to myself that I would somehow or other try to prevent other girls from being as frightened of that old superstition (which, after all, had not come true) and of any kindred ones as I had been; and I vowed a deep pink satin evening cloak, which I much cherished, as a thank-offering, and forced myself not to keep it with my trousseau, but to give it away when I married. Even after all these years I have hesitated to tell this foolish little tale. I am sure that many of you who read are feeling very superior about it—for I know that, if I read it of someone else, I should myself. But search your own hearts. Is there nothing hidden away as silly in its own way as that? No memory that makes you go a little hot when you think of it? I expect there is. That is what gave me courage to set this down. And if by chance there is no foolish thing for you to remember—why, that means that you are an adult person—and if you are that you will not sneer as you read. For adults—those rare beings—have no need for the reassurance brought by scorn.

I met the other day a young woman who was afraid life would not make her suffer enough. Odd anxiety of youth. I tried to reassure her, and she looked relieved, poor infant. But I doubt whether she quite accepted what I said. Only



if she suffered would she be really alive, that was how it seemed to her. One tells oneself that they need not worry, poor children, since even the happiest, perhaps most surely the happiest, must walk through hell on their way through life. But it may be that there is, after all, something in their fear. It turns, perhaps, on a definition of suffering. Certainly that girl's anxiety carried me back to those early years when I often had something of the same feeling myself. And in my case it does seem to me that I was justified. Something like that might very well have happened to me; the growing pains of life might have passed me by. Only if they had the misery would have been a good deal worse than anything I have known. It is, I suppose, what Florence Nightingale meant when she wrote: ". . . later in life they neither desire nor dream. . . ."

It was small wonder that since college was to lead to nothing more than coming back home and continuing with exactly the same purposeless life that I had left behind me—college for me did not last very long. "What," as a contemporary remarked, "is the use of college for a girl? You don't want to become Chancellor of the Exchequer!" I had no words to answer her with, and I had no idea at the time why the remark irritated me so much, or why it stuck like a burr in my consciousness, refusing to be shaken off. It never occurred to me that that, or something akin to it, was exactly what, somewhere deep down inside me, I did want to become. But since, on the surface, I was still quite unaware of it, and since, as I have said, I was already more than half in love, I soon left Somerville, and soon after that married.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is true that, quite apart from all that, college disliked me. Oxford, in the first decade of this century, was a very

different place from a girl's point of view from what it is in the fourth. Somerville smelt frousty to me. I disliked the ugliness of most of the public rooms, and I disliked the glass and the crockery and the way in which the tables were set. I disliked the food, and, more still, the way in which it was served.

St. Leonards was not a luxury school—we dusted our own desks, we darned our own stockings, on certain days we made our own beds, but, with all its simplicity, at school there had been beauty everywhere; at college—indoors, at least—there was, it seemed to me, none. And I disliked the dowdiness of the dons, and more still that of the other girls. Bad dressing I was used to at home (no one in this world could dress as badly as Aunt Lotty at her worst), but not exactly dowdy dressing; and though I might not be a very good dresser myself, I liked to see good dressing in other people. I could not bear the cloisterishness of the place; and felt irritated by the cautious way in which we were shut off from contact with men, the air of forced brightness and virtue that hung about the cocoa-cum-missionary-party-hymn-singing girls, and still more the self-conscious would-be naughtiness of those who reacted from this into smoking cigarettes and feeling wicked. And I disliked the slightly deprecating and dowdy, and again very self-conscious, atmosphere of ladylike culture that hung about the dons at play. I liked and admired the Principal of the College, Miss Maitland, and I rather liked my own tutor. But for most of the place, quite unaware that I was watching the awkward adolescence of something infinitely worth while, I had nothing but intolerant contempt. Somerville was certainly not my spiritual home.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

My husband, Humphrey Mackworth, eldest surviving son of Colonel Sir Arthur and Lady Mackworth, was a near neighbour of ours. His people lived at Caerleon-upon-Usk, only three miles from Llanwern. Not long before our marriage Humphrey had accepted the mastership of the Llangibby hounds. We took a very pretty little old house, Llansoar, within a few miles of our respective parents. Llansoar, built of old grey stone and covered with ivy, was a sixteenth-century building, originally a very small manor-house, which had for a long while, until comparatively recent years, been used as a farm. It was beautifully situated in a small wooded valley some way from the main road. We settled down there very happily.

I, who had been miserable between school and marriage, found no quarrel with life after my wedding. I was still so close to my old home that it did not mean seeing very much less of my family than before. Yet I had a house of my own, freedom I had never known before, and the status of an adult human being. I was happy—often exultantly happy. That, frankly, was not, I think, due in the first place to marriage at all, but to the fact that almost at the same moment that I married I found suffrage and then business. I was fully occupied with worthwhile things at last. Humphrey and I were, in fact, rather an oddly assorted couple. He was twelve years older than I was—that is a lot when one is young—and one difference in our views on manners for the married has stayed in my mind ever since: it seemed to sum up so much of the difference in our outlooks. Humphrey held that no one should ever read in a room where anyone else wanted to talk. I, brought up in a home in which a father's study was sacred, held, on the contrary, that no one should ever talk in a room where anyone else wanted to read. That a man who

never opened a book and a young woman whose nose was scarcely ever out of one might sooner or later experience some difficulty in building the house of their life together did not occur to me then with anything like the force that it would have later. When it did I shut it resolutely away.

On the other side of the balance I am bound to admit, when I look back, that it was rather hard on any peace-loving countryman to marry, in mistake for what he had no reason to suppose was anything but a simple, quiet, country maiden—me. But at the time I should have been, I think, not so much indignant as violently surprised if any frank, impartial, middle-aged person had pointed this out to me. That extreme shyness and diffidence of mine gave me in my youth a surface air of meekness which bore but little relation to facts. It deceived many people, including, curiously enough, to a very large extent, myself. That was part of the difficulty. I remember that when some years later I was sent to prison for burning the contents of a letter-box, an aunt of mine (an aunt by marriage, a real aunt would have known much better) said, “But I *can’t* believe Margaret did it—she is so gentle.” And when I was engaged a neighbour remarked that she feared I should give in in everything to my husband—a fear which was, I imagine, unshared by my parents.

So little did I know about myself or what was inside me when I married that during my engagement I withdrew from a local branch of the Liberal Social Council, to which, as my father’s daughter, I belonged, on the plea that as I was marrying a man who came of a Conservative family I must now become a Conservative. That was the traditional correct thing for wives to do. My mother had changed her party affiliations (the other way about); every other woman

I knew had done it. It never occurred to me that there was anything in my heart to prevent me following the same course. It is true that I cordially disliked the Liberal Social Council, since it seemed to me to have been deliberately formed to exploit in the interests of the party that sensitive and responsive nerve of snobbery which lies—whether hidden or not—in each one of us, and which has always seemed to me one of the most unattractive bits of all the human make-up. (I admit that there are others which apparently do more harm, but I always have preferred the smell of honest manure to that of patchouli.) I do not doubt that my dislike facilitated my resignation. But all the same . . .

Such meekness lasted an uncommonly short while. Within four months of my marriage I had joined the Pankhursts' organisation, "The Women's Social and Political Union," and shaken, as my pledge of membership bade me, the dust of all parties from off my feet, until such time as "the vote is granted to women on the same terms as it is, or may be, granted to men." And when the Franchise Act of 1928 came and set me free of my pledge, I had too long regarded parties from the outside to feel that I could ever again walk inside one.

I cannot now remember whether I ever actually, during those first days of marriage, joined the Conservative party, but since Humphrey himself was totally uninterested in politics, any change of front in this matter caused him, so far as I can recollect, no kind of trouble.

\* \* \* \* \*

There must have been, I suppose, a short interval directly after my marriage when I contemplated filling it up after the usual manner of the young leisured woman. But if so I cannot remember it. Just at the very beginning there were

a good many dinner parties "to meet the bride," and also, I suppose, calls. The dinner parties I rather liked. The calls I remember so little that I have a strong suspicion I must have forgotten to return most of them. I can scarcely believe that things I disliked so much would otherwise have left so slight an impression. On the whole I am sure that, with the cordial co-operation of Humphrey, who asked only to be left in peace to potter about the kennels, I escaped most of the usual social round. I have a dim recollection of my mother-in-law making faint efforts to push me a little more towards it, but she was far too tactful and wise a woman (amongst the wisest and kindest women that I have known) to press me unduly. Certainly it was she who, on my marriage, Presented me at Court. The only thing that I remember now about the affair is that I succeeded in persuading her to come away far earlier than I had got my mother to come when I had been Presented on coming out. But then my mother-in-law was always easier to persuade away from a party than my mother ever was.

One thing I certainly did do. I hunted, as became a Master's wife, pretty regularly, and that for a number of years. I did not care for it very much. Bits of it I liked, but on the whole, no. I enjoyed setting out to the cubbing meets in the early autumn mornings when the myriads of spiders' webs were still all glistening with dew on the blackberry-laden hedges. I liked the smell of the earth and of the mist and of the horses. I liked the noise of the hounds (there is nothing silent about a Welsh pack) and of the trampling horses, and the cries of the huntsmen and the feel of the countryside—and the sense of being part of the earth itself that somehow one gets even more when one is mounted on a sweating horse, amongst other pushing, crowding,

steaming beasts, than one does when one is standing upon one's own feet on the grass. I liked the atmosphere of the whole thing, the camaraderie of the crowd.

What, then, did I not like? Was it the cruelty I found unendurable? No, it was not that. Hunting seemed to me then, as it does to-day, entirely uncivilised and non-adult, really utterly indefensible, and of a cruelty which did not bear thinking about; but it shared that objection with so many other customs, sports and social habits, which I was prepared to acquiesce in and take advantage of (I did not myself think it, for example—nor do I now—anything like as cruel an institution as the Zoological Gardens) that I saw no sufficient cause for taking exception to it on that ground. I have never thought that it was possible to live with reasonable comfort in the world if one is acting up to all the more unpopular of one's theories at the same moment, and I was at that time acting up to quite as many of mine as I could conveniently manage. As the wife of the local M.F.H. I should have been a perfect nuisance and a wet-blanket if I had objected to hunting on the score of its cruelty. I disliked thinking about the details of the thing. I heartily disliked seeing the actual kill. When by chance I was up in time to see it—but that I seldom was, for I was far, very far, from being in the first flight of the horsemen—I turned my back and moved away, as did several other women. I imagine that some of the men might have liked to have done the same. What society condoned and even half approved of in us, however, would have been regarded as white-livered effeminacy in them. But my real dislike of hunting was that I was just plain frightened. My consideration was for myself, not for the fox. I hated having to jump the fences, which filled me with acute fear. I avoided it whenever I could—in Monmouthshire that is

easier than it would be in many counties; the big, overgrown, hairy fences are often unjumpable, and there are many gaps—and I hated it always. In the end, when opportunity offered, I gave up hunting with relief, and the relief was chiefly on account of the fences.





PART II  
A CHANGING WORLD



## CHAPTER X

### ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

"Happiness is the exercise of the vital faculties."—*Old Greek saying.*

MARRIAGE is all very well, but marriage when you do not have children and have an income sufficient to allow of a household consisting of three maids: cook, housemaid and parlourmaid, as we had from the beginning, is certainly not in itself an occupation. It is true that in my day there were, as I have suggested, certain generally accepted pastimes (from my very earliest childhood I have loathed the word pastime—why pass anything so precious as time? One might as well be dead) ready to the hand of the well-to-do young woman. One could, for example, become a light in the Girls' Friendly Society, or one could run a branch of the Mothers' Union. The latter course was, indeed, suggested to me by my mother-in-law. One's business would be, it seemed, to teach the village women something about household and child management. I was quite firm. "They know," said I truly, "far more about these things than I do. I will not teach people things they know and I don't." Besides, I had very definite theories about every form of charitable occupation. I classed it all, with infinite scorn, under the heading of "doing good to the poor," than which (brought up as I had been, I scarcely realised how much under an imperfect social system the help might be needed) I could imagine no more intolerable or unpardonable impertinence.

I do not know what would have happened to me if about that time two amazingly lucky chances had not befallen to rescue me from the life of unoccupied faculties and petty futility that apparently stretched before me. I think the crop of misery would have been pretty bad. To this day I fairly often meet women who make me say to myself, "There but for the grace of God . . ."

The two lucky chances were, first the discovery of the militant suffrage movement, and secondly the fact, which, of course, irrevocably altered and made my whole life, that my father, turning about for someone who should be a cross between a confidential secretary and a right-hand man whom he could completely trust, was induced by my mother to try me.

The militant suffrage movement was a thrilling discovery. It supplied the answer to a thousand puzzling problems. And it gave a chance of activity. A cousin, Florence Haig, a contemporary of my mother's, an artist who lived in Chelsea, had been caught up into it, and when she came out of prison we, much interested all three of us to hear all about it, asked her down to Llanwern. That was in the early days of the suffrage movement, when the whole idea of prison was still very much of a novelty. The result of her visit, so far as I was concerned, was the determination to walk in a Suffrage Procession to Hyde Park. I was within a month of being married at the time, and had a certain difficulty—though really not so very much—in persuading my future husband that there was no harm in the plan. My mother accompanied me, (*a*) because she did not think that an unmarried girl should walk unchaperoned through the gutter, (*b*) because she believed in votes for women. In the event I thoroughly enjoyed the procession, which she did

not. She came of a generation which took the gutter and casual street insults hard.

I do not remember that at that time I had thought the thing out at all. I had been brought up, it is true, in a home which believed in votes for women, but up till that visit of Cousin Florence's the fact had meant, so far as I was aware, very little to me. And when she came I went into the militant movement instinctively, thrilled with this chance for action, this release for energy, but unaware that this at last was what I had, all unconsciously, been seeking for, and, at first, totally ignorant of, and unconcerned with, the arguments for our cause. It was a temperamental, not in any sense an intellectual, conversion.

Having made up my mind, however, I had to discover why I believed what I did. Through the following year I got and read every book and every pamphlet for and against suffrage. I had drawers and drawers full of pamphlets; the house was thick with them. . . . My intellectual assent was complete, but it came second, not first.

It must have been about that time that I had a chance conversation with a country neighbour—a girl I knew well, a kindly, pleasant, capable, very average girl, of twenty-eight or nine—in the course of which, in one unconscious phrase, she summed up all that was by then trying to become articulate in my revolt against the life the average well-to-do woman was expected to lead. She was setting off to play bridge. It was a lovely afternoon in late April and the country was looking perfect. It seemed great waste to spend the day indoors unless one need. "Why," said I, "do you play bridge in the afternoon?" A shadow crossed her face and a queer, discontented inflection came into her voice. "One must do something," she said; "I'd sooner wear out

than rust out." And playing bridge was "wearing out" . . . that is a definition which I shall never forget.

One sometimes hears people who took part in the suffrage campaign pitied. And indeed one knows that there were those to whom it was a martyrdom, who gave everything they had—health, and even life—for it. Such names as Lady Constance Lytton's come to one's mind; the story of the imprisonment which ruined her health and shortened her life—among the most dramatic epics that I know—will some day be better known than it is yet. Or one remembers those years under the Cat and Mouse Act, when month after month Mrs. Pankhurst, coming near to death in prison, would be let loose to recover, and then hunted down again. That was a ghastly happening; it is difficult to believe that life to her just then can have been anything but pure nightmare. But for me, and for many other young women like me, militant suffrage was the very salt of life. The knowledge of it had come like a draught of fresh air into our padded, stifled lives. It gave us release of energy, it gave us that sense of being of some use in the scheme of things, without which no human being can live at peace. It made us feel that we were part of life, not just outside watching it. It made us feel that we had a real purpose and use apart from having children. (Greatly though I wanted children, the idea that having them was in itself a sufficient justification for existence had never satisfied me. I had found a sentence somewhere to the effect that if the sole purpose of man is reproduction he is of no more use than would be a hammer whose sole function was to make other hammers. It was a sentence which had stuck firmly in my mind, for it expressed what I had always felt, yet found no words for.) It gave us hope of freedom and power and opportunity. It

gave us scope at last, and it gave us what normal healthy youth craves—adventure and excitement. Prison itself, its loneliness (I only tasted it once), its sense of being padlocked in, was indeed sheer taut misery—and there was a lot of dull drudgery too, as there is in all work; but the things people expected one to mind, speaking at rowdy street-corner meetings, selling papers in the gutter, walking clad in sandwich boards in processions, I for my part thoroughly enjoyed, and I suspect that most of my contemporaries did the same. We were young, after all, and we enjoyed experience. These things might frighten us a little in project, but they satisfied the natural appetite of youth for colour and incident.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the procession to Hyde Park I determined to join the Pankhursts' organisation, the Women's Social and Political Union, but was held up in this resolve for three months by the fact that my father, who had considerable foresight and realised pretty well what joining that body was likely to mean, was inclined to be opposed to the idea. However, I finally decided that he could be no judge of a matter which concerned one primarily as a woman. Prid meanwhile had, travelling by a slightly different road, arrived at the same conclusion. (In any big decision she has to begin by being intellectually convinced.) She and I met one autumn day in London, and, full of excitement, went off together to Clement's Inn and joined.

Whereupon it occurred to some of my father's Merthyr constituents that it would be a pretty compliment to my father to ask me to come and address the local Liberal Club on suffrage. Since I had never spoken in my life save for that one Welsh sentence of my childhood and an occasional "Thank you very much" when the constituents cheered my



father's family, I felt, not unnaturally, a little nervous. Moreover, it was obvious that the opportunity of getting inside a Liberal Club must be used to full advantage. So I wrote to Annie Kenney, one of the leaders of the W.S.P.U., and asked her to accompany me, and persuaded the secretary of the club to allow her to speak too. Also I asked Annie Kenney how one learnt to speak. "Tell them," replied she, "firstly what you want, secondly why you want it, and thirdly how you mean to get it." It was a simple formula for an inexperienced speaker, and for years I based every speech upon it.

Unfortunately just before we went up to Merthyr there had been an incident at Bristol in which someone had threatened Mr. Churchill with a whip, and the Liberals were much enraged. Moreover, the executive of the club, in inviting us, had rather overlooked the point of view of its younger members. It should not have done so. They arrived in large quantities—the little hall was in fact packed to capacity—and they brought with them gongs, tin trumpets and other musical instruments, herrings (a great many herrings) and tomatoes. In fact, the only four really unpleasant things that were missing—I met them all later—were flour bags, eggs, squibs and the evil-smelling carbon bisulphide gas.

It may be supposed that, with so many musical instruments in the room, speaking was not easy—in fact, so far as being heard was concerned it was impossible. The chairman implored us to give up the meeting and make our escape through a way at the back of the platform. But Annie Kenney utterly refused to do anything of the kind. It appeared that if one closed any meeting in less than one hour from the time of its opening, one was apt to give the impression to the enemy that it had been broken up, and that one had been forced to fly. Such a course, it was ex-

plained to us, was never so much as contemplated in suffragette circles. So Annie Kenney and I stood together at the front of the platform and took it in turns to speak. No one could hear us, we could not hear ourselves—if I wanted to make Annie Kenney hear I had to bawl at the top of my voice into her ear—but honour was being satisfied.

A herring is a floppy thing, there is nothing much to it unless thrown very hard; and a ripe tomato, though messy and damaging to clothes, does not hurt at all. For my part I was uncommonly relieved not to have to make a speech that anyone could hear, and, not being in the position of chief responsibility, I was pleasantly exhilarated by the whole affair. At the end of a short hour the chairman, with infinite relief—but of course entirely inaudibly—declared the meeting closed. Walking with slow dignity, we left the platform and hall by the back way he had suggested.

\* \* \* \* \*

Followed the conviction on my part that it was essential that our local town, Newport, should be converted to suffrage, and that the best way to achieve this result would be to hire the largest hall in the town and get Christabel Pankhurst to come and speak to its inhabitants. But I had never so much as been inside any hall in Newport—meetings, I had thought, were boring things—I had not the least idea what halls the town possessed or which was the biggest. Out hunting I met an old gentleman and made inquiries of him. He strongly advised me to give up the whole project. It would be, he declared, a bad error. But except that it was “a great mistake to get mixed up with these things,” he could not tell me why. And he informed me that the Temperance Hall was the most suitable; it held eleven hundred people.

I booked the Temperance Hall. Christabel Pankhurst refused to come, but Mrs. Pankhurst accepted the invitation. I had never heard or seen either of them, and should have preferred the one nearest to my own age. But so long as I got a Pankhurst I did not greatly care which. So far so good. There were, however, other difficulties. To begin with every young hooligan in the town threatened joyously to come and break up the meeting; and, further, it seemed that one had to find a chairman and stewards. Stewards materialised from somewhere by some kind of magic, but they were not stewards who had ever stewarded at, or so much as attended, a public meeting before. As for the chair, since there was no one else to be found, I decided to take it myself. But I was not entirely happy about it. I had only spoken once in my life—at Merthyr—and in the circumstances I could scarcely feel that I had been initiated into the art of speaking. Moreover, what I did now know about the possibility of rowdy meetings did not help to encourage me. The only thing I knew for certain was that I did not know enough to keep a rowdy meeting in order.

Well, the evening came. The crowd came—packing the hall to overflowing. The rowdy youths came. And one other factor I had scarcely fully reckoned upon came—Mrs. Pankhurst. She held that audience in the hollow of her hand. When a youth interrupted she turned and dealt with him, silenced him, and, without faltering in the thread of her speech, used him as an illustration of an argument. The audience was so intent to hear every word that even when one little group of youths let out that aforementioned evil-smelling gas it did no more than cause a faint stir in one small corner of the hall. As Mrs. Pankhurst continued the interruptions got fewer and fewer, and at last ceased altogether. Even when at the end came question-time,

members of the audience were uncommonly chary of delivering themselves into her hands. That meeting was a revelation of the power of a great speaker.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

One of the first effects that joining the militant movement had on me, as perhaps on the majority of those of my generation who went into it, was that it forced me to educate myself. I had joined this cause that my cousin thought worth going to prison for in complete conviction of the obvious rightness of its ideals, and working against the majority opinion of the country in association with a like-minded group soon roused in me a strong emotional response. But once joined I had to rationalise my emotions. Why did I know I was right? In anything that has mattered to me I have never argued from premises to conclusions. I have always found myself at the conclusion and had to go back and unearth the subconscious premises that led me there. So I started to read—or rather I started to read on new lines.

I read to begin with, of course, the whole literature of feminism: leaflets, pamphlets, books in favour and books against. Of books that mattered dealing directly with feminism there were curiously few. Only three now stay in my mind: John Stuart Mill's "Subjection of Women," Olive Schreiner's "Woman and Labour," Cicely Hamilton's "Marriage as a Trade"; and perhaps one should add a fourth, Shaw's "Quintessence of Ibsenism." Of course, there were stray passages in others; one or two of Israel Zangwill's Essays, for example, I find unforgettable to this day. Of books which indirectly reinforced the suffrage position the number was, however, legion. One of those which had the most effect on me personally was "Mrs. Warren's

Profession" (a play which sent many a woman to prison), together with the preface to "Plays Unpleasant." But from feminist literature proper a dozen paths led out into other subjects, each of which bore on feminism in one way or another, and each of which needed exploring. One wanted to read up political science and economics. One wanted to have some general idea of psychology, of sociology, and even of anthropology. And one wanted to get at the theories and the reasons behind the facts. That was what was interesting; and as I read on, politics and the theory of politics fascinated me. Different systems of government, why they succeeded, why they failed. Different races, how far they needed different treatment. International reactions, what caused them. These things interested me more and more. These things interested me most of all.

Also, I remember that I then for the first time—it had never seemed worth while before—studied in detail and at some length the political and social history of the nineteenth century, making out a great chart of the period, reading side by side MacCarthy's "History," Morley's "Gladstone," Bryce's "History of the American Constitution," and half a dozen other books bearing on the same period, and entering the chief events of each year and decade in their place on my chart.

Of the quantities of books on politics, economics, finance, the working of the Exchanges, sociology, anthropology and psychology which I read during the first few happy years of that new revelation, some few still remain fresh in my mind. I can still, for example, vividly remember reading Havelock Ellis's "Psychology of Sex." It was the first thing of its kind I had found. Though I was far from accepting it all, it opened up a whole new world of thought to me. I discussed it at some length with my father, and he, much

interested, went off to buy the set of volumes for himself; but in those days one could not walk into a shop and buy "The Psychology of Sex"; one had to produce some kind of signed certificate from a doctor or lawyer to the effect that one was a suitable person to read it. To his surprise he could not at first obtain it. I still remember his amused indignation that he was refused a book which his own daughter had already read. But the fact was that the Cavendish Bentinck Library, to which I, in common with many others, owe a deep debt of gratitude, was at that time supplying all the young women in the suffrage movement with the books they could not procure in the ordinary way.\*

It was not only, of course, back history that one wanted to dig up. Current history, the politics of the day, which up till then I had rejected as not for my touching, became on a sudden vividly alive—a thing in which it behoved me to ferret out every scrap of knowledge, every possible current of opinion. Politics had become my business. I had a right to them now; they belonged to me as much as to all the rest of the world.

In the train between Newport and Cardiff my father used to glance every morning at practically all the local and London daily papers. The newsboy, who had a standing order, used to come rushing down the platform with an enormous armful of them. He said that to look at dailies of every shade of politics was one of the best ways of keeping

\* Mrs. Ruth Cavendish Bentinck, who some quarter of a century ago founded the Cavendish Bentinck Library, did thereby as useful a piece of work as any one in the suffrage movement. The Library, at first housed in the International Women's Suffrage Club, to which in those days most of us belonged, still exists and still serves a very useful purpose. It now occupies a sumptuous room in Women's Service House in Marsham Street, and boasts of a trained librarian all to itself.

in touch with public opinion. His plan seemed good to me. I copied it.

But it was not in fact the dailies which interested me most. The papers which I really read assiduously were the weekly reviews. The dailies were all right for news (although any inside knowledge of a movement which receives such wide publicity as did militant suffrage, is a liberal education in the difference between actual happenings and their reporting), but they seemed to me too breathless as they hurried by, one issue treading on the heels of the next, with leader-writers who, each night, were forced to comment on events almost before they had happened, to be of much use for anything else. They never seemed to have time to give one a real picture of the world as a whole. A weekly had time to pause and think, to sum up, to eliminate the unessential, to achieve a proportioned whole, to give something approaching a considered opinion. It was to the weeklies that I turned. When in 1913 the *New Statesman* was born, I was enormously interested. My father too was interested. The *New Statesman*, he reported—not too pleased—was being taken in by an enormous number of Civil Servants; it was penetrating right through Whitehall. It was insensibly, subtly, gradually heading opinion towards Socialism, towards State Control—and, said he, what the Civil Service thought on a matter of that kind mattered more in the long run than what anyone else in the country thought. I listened open-eared. To mould the opinion, not of the large crowd, but of the keystone people, the people who in their turn would guide the crowd—what a fascinating thing to be able to do! Perhaps the most fascinating of all. I envied the *New Statesman*.

\* \* \* \* \*

The reading which I had started to explain the basis of

my own convictions to myself had very soon to be continued as a matter of powder and shot, for I had not been in the movement many months before I had to learn to speak. Some knowledge, for example, of the mob violence that preceded the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867 was uncommonly useful in retort to a crowd that violently objected to violence, and told us so at every meeting. "Why do you want to go and be so rowdy?" said they. "Why can't you ask politely?" "Who that asked politely ever got anything?" retorted we, and hurled at them details of bishops rolled in the mud by the mob in 1831, because they had voted against the first Reform Bill; of how Hyde Park palings had been thrown down in 1866, just before the passage of the second Reform Bill, of the various coincidences according to which all through the later nineteenth century Irish reforms had followed upon Irish violence. It was a great pity, we agreed sadly, that British Governments were made that way, but there it was, and the only thing to do was to take it into account if you really wanted anything done. "Can you give us a single instance," said we, "of a big reform that was ever carried without violence? Why, even the extension of the franchise to the agricultural labourer in 1884 had to be preceded by a talk of violence, when Chamberlain threatened Parliament with a march of a hundred thousand men on London should the Lords reject the Bill." By this time the crowd, which seldom had its nineteenth-century history at its finger tips, was too dazed by our mass of facts and figures to think of a further reply; and we concluded virtuously on a high moral note by pointing out that the difference between us and all previous agitators was that *we* only endangered property. *We* were careful in everything we did not to take or even to risk life. Those street corner meetings were great fun.



Certainly it was during those years of fused enthusiasm rather than during the ordinary years of school and college that, reading, studying, thinking, puzzling, I got the best of what education I have had. And, as I have said, I suspect that that is true of many another militant of my generation.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

But the militant movement did more than force me to educate myself and to learn to speak; it also made me take to writing. One of the first necessities of every local branch of the W.S.P.U. was a group of people who would write indignant letters to the local paper whenever, either in leading articles or on the news-page, suffrage was attacked or suffrage news distorted, and who would reply to all anti-suffrage letters. I was one of that group. It was rather amusing work. Then one day W.S.P.U. headquarters from Clement's Inn sent out a circular to the effect that it should be the duty of every secretary of every local branch of the Union to appoint one or more persons who would be responsible for sending in regular weekly articles dealing with the suffrage movement to all the local papers. I immediately appointed myself. I was not very proud of the way I carried out the duties of secretary to the Newport branch. I knew well enough that it might be far better done. But here, I felt in my bones, was a thing I could do. On the other hand, I was rather doubtful how I should find time to do it; and not at all certain as to whether the local papers would feel inclined to print the stuff when written (but in this latter anxiety I proved wrong—I had failed to appreciate the value of a column of free copy). Still, it had to be done. I demanded of my father a typewriter for a birthday present, made tentative advances to the smallest and least important of the local papers, which made friendly response, and started to work.

But that was only the beginning. One Sunday a few weeks later, when my father and I had been climbing the Breconshire Beacons (a favourite Sunday occupation), as we walked along the side of the Merthyr reservoir on our way home, we came upon the editor of the *Western Mail*, best known of all Welsh daily papers, fishing. My father introduced me, and in the same breath inquired whether the editor would like me to send him in occasional articles about militant suffrage. What between his natural Welsh desire to be polite and his doubts as to how articles from the pen of a young woman whose sole qualification for writing them lay in her firm belief in the righteousness of militancy would fit into the pages of his respectable journal, the editor's struggle was not an invisible one. For my part, I also was rather taken aback. I did not believe myself a sufficiently experienced writer to be worthy to be printed in the columns of a paper so widely respected as the *Western Mail*, and, indeed, the editor's own feelings on the subject were far from being hidden from me. Moreover, as I have said, I considered my time to be already fully occupied. But the editor was too polite to refuse point-blank, and as for myself, that amazing conscience which the militant movement bred in those who worked for it told me that I had no right to reject such a heaven-sent opportunity to further suffrage, and gave me no peace till the first article was written. It was published on an August Bank Holiday: I have always supposed that the paper was short of copy that day.

*L'appétit vient en mangeant.* Within a few months I was employing my leisure time in turning out two or three articles weekly in praise of militancy, which were published in various local papers. I do not remember much about them. I rather think that week by week chunks were lifted bodily from the leading article of the organ of the W.S.P.U.,

*Votes for Women*. I remember that that struck me early as a brilliant way of economising effort.

One incident stays in my mind. I had on one occasion quoted a couple of lines from some verses of Sir Owen Seaman's. When the article appeared they had been excised. Looking back now, it seems clear enough that the article was two lines too long for the space allotted to it. But no such prosaic explanation was likely to occur to me in those days. I assumed, with a modesty which, alas, has gone with the years, that the sub-editor must know best, and that in quoting those particular lines I had in some way been guilty of a *gaffe* from the consequence of which his blue pencil had saved me. I blushed for days.

Writing articles for the local papers soon led to being asked to review suffrage books for the local papers—a request which one never dared to refuse in case they should fall into the hands of anti-suffrage reviewers. Soon, all the spare time I had which was not taken up in composing speeches was devoted to writing articles and reviews.

The first book I ever reviewed in my life was H. G. Wells' "Marriage"—moved thereto partly by my disgust at what I still recollect describing as "the cloven hoof" of his anti-feminism (anti-suffragism one called it then), but chiefly by the fact that at the moment of finishing the book I was laid up with influenza and had nothing to do. I sent my review to *Votes for Women*. They printed it. No one was ever so proud in her life as I.

*Votes for Women* also accepted—and in the circumstances its subject must have appealed to them—a sketch which, when I think of it, brings back a whole once familiar world. I wrote of how, standing in the gutter selling *Votes for Women* in Newport High Street one busy, crowded Saturday morning, I saw the chestnut nose of the horse that drew

my mother-in-law's victoria coming round the corner, and instinctively dived down the nearest side street. I have all my life found a difficulty in realising that what I do not see really happens, or that people can be really aware of things to which they do not refer. I do not suppose now that the fact that I tactfully, or at least timidly, dived down a side street when I actually saw her carriage approaching, prevented Lady Mackworth from knowing that her daughter-in-law sold suffrage papers in the street on market days. But I half supposed it then.

I never in those days really pictured what it must have been like to know that one's daughter-in-law did such things. It was all very well for a father devoid of all trace of worry about conventions, and a mother who, although her intentions were of the most excellently conventional—she prided herself strongly on keeping my father and myself in the straight and narrow path of correctitude—in fact only remembered them a little spasmodically and with some effort, and who for that matter went fairly placidly to prison herself. And, indeed, my mother was the last person who could reasonably have objected. In her youth, horror-stricken at the W. T. Stead revelations, she had prayed passionately that her baby-daughter might become a feminist. But it must have been a good deal harder on my husband's family than I, brought up as I had been, could very easily appreciate. It must indeed have been a difficult position for my husband's parents to face with dignity, affection, friendliness and complete lack of any attempt at interference—but they did. And even sometimes came to my meetings. At the time I had little idea of what it must mean to them. My husband also took what must often have been an uncommonly irritating situation amazingly well. He used on occasion even to go so far as to bring the car and a thermos flask

full of hot soup into Newport to meet special excursion trains which came down after the great Albert Hall meetings and arrived at three in the morning. The thing that amazes me now, when I remember those three in the morning arrivals, is why on such occasions one did not stay the night in London. But I rather think that the local branch of the W.S.P.U. used to arrange a party and make terms with the railway authorities on the basis of a certain agreed number of return tickets. And so we all came home together.

## CHAPTER XI

### STREET CORNER MEETINGS AND CABINET MINISTERS

OUT of those years snatches of incidents come back to me. There was, for example, the time when Prid and I decided to spend a summer holiday in learning to speak. It appeared to us that, killing two birds with one stone, we might as well start upon the conversion of a new district at the same time. We decided upon Devonshire, partly because it was as yet practically untouched by the militant movement, partly, if I remember rightly, because we liked Devonshire cream, and thought we might as well combine a little pleasure with business.

I remember our first meeting very well. We hired our lorry, and all day we chalked the pavements of Barnstaple, announcing the time and place of the meeting, our hearts sinking lower and lower as the evening approached. For my part by the time the meeting came near I was feeling, as I always did before speaking in those early days, physically sick. We had our usual discussion as to how the meeting should proceed. The difficulty was that we each liked to speak first, but that we each wanted to answer the questions at the end. We were both good at answering questions; it was the only part of the meeting we were not afraid of. As for the speaking first, that desire was due to the fear that if one spoke second the other might have taken already all the points one meant to make, and we were neither of us, at that stage, able to deviate by the fraction of an inch from the lines of a speech once projected. Prid

once suggested that we might get over this difficulty if I would tell her beforehand what I wanted to say, and offered to speak second on this condition, but I replied that if I once divulged to a single soul what I proposed to say, I should never be able to say it. On this first occasion the market-place was already filled when we arrived with a large and amiably disposed crowd, which appeared to listen to our anxiously prepared speeches with much pleasure and laughed at our mildest jokes. We felt considerably elated; it was not for some while that we noticed that the gentle ripple of laughter continued even when we were not trying to make jokes. We traced it at last to a placard which some wit had hung above our heads before we arrived, which read "Blokes for Women."

Another street corner meeting, held this time at Sherborne, stays in my mind. Again Prid and I were the speakers. We had had high-tea first, and as we ate, Prid had held forth to me at some length upon the maternal instinct—a marvellous thing it was, she said, protective, tender, loving, all-embracing. And it was a great mistake to suppose, she declared, that only motherhood evoked it; it was there in all women, married or single, and it was evoked by every child they met. The meeting was not a successful one. All the small boys of the town had gathered to see us, and, so far as I can now remember, no one else. The small boys were vociferous; moreover, they were armed (and apparently re-armed from some inexhaustible store) with rotten tomatoes. I appealed to their honour as Boy Scouts to give us a fair hearing; but their honour only lasted for two minutes. At the end of a short hour we thankfully declared the meeting closed, and walked with dignified slowness (which is, indeed, the only safe plan) away. As

we walked, rotten tomatoes splashed in the middle of our backs; one hit Prid on the crown of a comparatively new hat, and her temper went completely. She expressed her opinion of those children with a vigour and eloquence which, following so soon on our conversation at tea, I found interesting. I remember that I suggested that her present remarks must be another kind of manifestation of the maternal spirit, and Prid, quite undefeated, declared that they were.

One autumn I went down to spend a few days with Prid's people at Parkstone. My visit was, of course, punctuated, as were all our visits to each other in those days, with meetings. There was, Prid said, a square on the outskirts of Bournemouth in which we simply *must* hold an open-air meeting. The last people who had tried to do so had been driven away, and that had left a very bad impression in the neighbourhood. As treasurer of the local branch of the W.S.P.U., she felt that it was up to her to put the matter right. She was at that time teaching all day, so she deputed to me the task of hiring the lorry and making all the necessary arrangements. When I went up to the locality and tried to hire the lorry, however, I was told in the first shop that I entered that nothing would induce them to let me have a lorry for such a purpose. The last suffragettes, said they, had only just escaped with their lives. If we liked to risk being killed that was our affair, but they were certainly not going to allow their good lorry to be broken up by the crowd for the sake of one evening's hire. After scouring the neighbourhood and getting the same reply from shop after shop, I finally found one kindly man whose lorry was so old and worn that it was due for the scrap-heap shortly in any event, and on my promising



to make good any dilapidations, and after telling me all over again the story of the last suffragettes, he agreed to let us have it.

I went home feeling far from brave. I did not believe in its entirety the story of the last suffragettes. Stories like that grew like mushrooms wherever one went—still, there must be some truth at the bottom of it. However, I certainly had not the courage to face Prid and tell her I had failed to make the necessary arrangements out of sheer fright. Prid herself was a little nervous. It appeared that the last suffragettes had worn scarves, and that these had been pulled tight round their necks by the crowd as they stood with their backs to a wall. It sounded most unpleasant. We took no scarves.

The lorry was duly there when we arrived. It was the most rickety rattle-trap concoction that ever could have called itself a lorry. And the interesting thing about it was that as soon as we got onto it, it began to shake violently. Prid *must* be frightened, thought I, supposing that it was she that was making it shake like that.

The crowd, a large one, was, after all, not too bad. It threw little apples and dry horse-dung at us, but it cannot have thrown them very hard, for I have no recollection of being bruised afterwards. And it became a good deal more amiable as we went on. We were able to make ourselves very well heard towards the end of the meeting. When it was over two kindly and slightly anxious policemen appeared, and offered to escort us to the tram. I walked through the crowd with them for some little way thinking that Prid was behind me before, on turning round, I discovered that she was not. And on hurrying back I found her placidly strolling about the square selling *Votes for Women* to the audience, who were buying well. So in

the end that meeting was a complete success. But the curious thing was that when we compared notes about the shaking lorry, Prid said she too had noticed it, but had put it down to me. So which of us it was, or whether (as is likely enough) it was really both of us, we shall never know. I discovered later that one can, if one is nervous, make any rickety platform shake to and fro violently, without having the least idea that one is shaking oneself.

\* \* \* \*

I cannot feel that X—— was one of our successes, and I cannot now remember what it was that first suggested to us that we ought to convert it—perhaps some instinct told us that it badly needed tackling. X—— for its part made it clear from the start that it did not welcome conversion; certainly it was a tough job.

X—— was a fair-sized mining village. One member of the Newport branch of the W.S.P.U. lived there, and she appeared to begin with to welcome the idea of an X—— crusade. So one day, early in the afternoon, we set out—three of us: Prid, who was staying with me at the time; Miss C——, an elementary school teacher and an enthusiastic local member; and I. Our plan was the usual one. We would prospect the town; decide upon the best place for an open-air meeting; hire our lorry; chalk the streets with the announcement of time (probably 7.30) and place of the meeting; call on the leading inhabitants and ask them to make a point of being present, have some high-tea and a short rest-pause, and then hold the meeting. Very simple. But things began going wrong from the start. The first thing that went wrong was the local member. She mistrusted the idea of an open-air meeting (local members had sometimes a way of doing that)—she did not feel somehow

that X—— was the right place for it. How, then, we inquired, were we to proceed with the conversion of X——? But she had no alternative to offer except the suggestion that a meeting held three months hence would have far greater chance of success than a meeting held to-day. That was a suggestion which we had met before. We ignored it, and she became markedly less helpful in the matter of telling us who to approach and where. Further, it appeared that her aspirations were of a social rather than a political nature. She welcomed me warmly—was I not the daughter and daughter-in-law of two well-known local men? But Prid and Miss C—— she classed together as “merely teachers” and treated with marked coldness and some contempt. As we walked about the town on our business, she insisted on walking with me all the time. Prid and Miss C—— were left to walk happily together behind. She was not at all an entertaining companion. We were due to spend some five hours in X—— before the meeting began, and it appeared to me that I should have to spend the whole of those five hours talking to her and to her alone. I could not feel that this was fair, and after a while I bethought me of a way out of the difficulty. I remarked in the course of our conversation that Prid was a cousin of Lady Constance Lytton’s. This was not, strictly speaking, true, but I hoped that Lady Constance, had she known all the circumstances, would have forgiven me. My plan worked like magic; within a minute or two Prid was in front with Mrs. H——, whilst I walked happily behind with Miss C——. We walked for the rest of the afternoon in that order. Later, when Prid discovered to what she owed the change of partners, she was a little indignant. But it really would not have been fair that I should have had to endure that woman for the whole five hours.

But Mrs. H—— was not our only trouble. Directly we began chalking the streets—at which point that lady disappeared—we realised that X——'s reactions to militant suffrage were likely to be militant. When we returned to Mrs. H——'s house for tea (when she explained to us that she was unfortunately prevented from attending the subsequent meeting) we were followed by a crowd which filled the whole of the square outside. After tea I had occasion to cross the square to a house on the other side. I returned with my hat and purse-bag gone and my hair pulled down my back. We began to look forward to the meeting with some trepidation. However, together, the three of us struggled through the crowd to the appointed place, at which we found the lorry waiting. And we struggled through the meeting. I doubt if the crowd heard much of anything we said; and I do dislike rotten eggs more than any other kind of political missile I know; the smell of them clung about us till we bathed, and as for our motor veils, we burnt them. However, I will say that the bundles of *Votes for Women* sold like hot cakes; we had not one left to take home. Which was something.

At the end we consulted together as to what had best be done. My mother had promised to send the Llanwern car to meet us and bring us home, as there was no train back at the hour we wanted to leave. We had arranged to meet it at the station. But the station was a quarter of a mile away, and the meeting was impatiently waiting for us to get down off the lorry, obviously looking forward to considerable further entertainment, and more inclined for real mischief than I have ever seen a crowd. Someone—the usual friendly person that exists, thank goodness, in every nasty crowd—told us of a short cut to the station, through some narrow back gardens, and explained the way. So we got

down, managed somehow to dodge our pursuers, jumped a couple of small hedges, and ran through rows of cabbages to the station. But the crowd, though it had missed the way we had taken, knew nicely that we were making for the station. We got there first, but by a few moments only; it was close on our heels. And we were early; the car was not due for another half-hour. The little local station was empty, not a porter, not a station-master—nothing. Nothing but the crowd. We ran on to the platform and over the footbridge. Our pursuers followed. And then one of us had the idea of taking refuge in the ladies' waiting-room. "They won't dare to come in there," we said. It was a particularly stupid plan, because the crowd was in no mood to respect the notice, "Ladies." And in any case one should always face a crowd in the open, and *never* run from it. An English crowd (but this was a Welsh one, which is not quite the same thing) seldom does much damage out of doors, but a small enclosed place is a trap in which two or three temporarily mad youths may do real harm. Still, the "Ladies Only" did keep them hesitating for a minute or two, and then they began to get over their hesitation. In another minute they would have been in. Miss C—— started to charge them with her umbrella. Prid and I dashed at her and reft it from her. To use force when you are in a minority of a hundred to one is sheer lunacy. To make them angrier than they were was madness. . . .

And then we heard a new sound. . . . And there, guarded by a posse of police, appeared my mother, come to tell us that the car was waiting outside. Why she had come herself (she had never intended to), why she was half an hour early, or where she had raised the police, I do not know. She often had an odd instinct that told her when my father or I were in any difficulty. I suppose it must have worked

that evening. The youths fell back; we pushed out of the waiting-room. The police made a way for us through the crowd, and we followed up the platform and over the foot-bridge in single file. My mother, her head erect and her cheeks pink, walked sedately first. The crowd, afraid to do more, kicked at her as she went by. Following close behind her, and secure now in the protection of the police, I kicked back. Outside, looking the picture of misery, sat our old chauffeur. Still guarded, we stepped into the car and drove off.

But of course we could not leave X—— like that. It was against every tradition of the W.S.P.U. to leave any place alone after a really bad meeting. One was always expected to go back and have a successful, or at least a quiet one, as a follow up. So I went back. But this time I decided to run as few risks as possible. It should be an indoor meeting. I booked the little local hall. And I inclined to the idea of police protection. I went to the X—— police station to tell them of the date, time and place of the meeting and to ask them to send a policeman to it. But the X—— police disapproved of the suffragettes as strongly as did the rest of X——. The constable in charge utterly refused to let me have any protection. If I held the meeting at all (and he strongly advised me not to) I would hold it at my own risk. We argued until we both completely lost our tempers. "Ratepayers have the right to demand protection," said I. "We pay for you, and we've the right to be protected by you." "If," replied he, "I thought *you* paid for so much as one button on my uniform I would tear it off and throw it on the ground!"

Well, whatever my theoretical rights might be, it was clear that in practice I should get no police. We went for-

ward, hoping for the best. And on the whole the best—at least, the best that X—— could reasonably be expected to give—happened. No one took the faintest interest in that meeting. The hall was barely half full of a bored audience which listened in polite lugubrious silence to our speeches. Honour was satisfied. We shook the dust of X—— off our feet and went home.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

It did not come my way to interrupt many meetings, but I did occasionally come across a Cabinet Minister. The one I remember best was the Prime Minister of the day. It was in St. Andrews during one of the General Elections of 1910. The reason I found myself up there was that I had gone to do my electioneering in Scotland because it would have been a trifle awkward for my father as a Liberal Member of Parliament to have had a daughter trying to interrupt his own leaders in his immediate neighbourhood. The late Lord Oxford, then Mr. Asquith, was to address a meeting in the St. Andrews Town Hall. It had been decided that no women should be admitted. The explanation given was that the Town Hall was small and there would not, within its walls, be enough room even for all the men who wanted to hear him. Nobody, however, believed the explanation. Everyone knew perfectly well that the real reason was the suffragettes.

It was at that time a point of honour with the W.S.P.U. to see to it that no Cabinet Minister spoke at any public meeting without being reminded of the fact that women wanted votes. St. Andrews, like the rest of the world, was well aware of this, and, in addition to denying admittance to women, it had arranged for the entrance to the Town Hall to be carefully guarded by a strong posse of police.

All St. Andrews citizens were further aware that the day before the meeting the suffragettes had actually arrived in the town. They had—three of us. And we were uncommonly puzzled, in view of the non-admittance order and the posse of police, how best to remind Mr. Asquith of our existence.

The hall was not of the kind into which it would be possible to obtain entrance unobserved—any reminding would have, we decided, to be done before the Prime Minister entered the building. On the evening of the meeting we divided forces; our leader, Cecilia Haig, a cousin of my mother's generation, went off in one direction (I cannot now remember what happened to her); Miss G——, a young Scottish woman, tried to worm her way through the police at the door of the hall, and I, standing a little further away down the road, decided that my only chance of meeting Mr. Asquith that night was to jump on to the dashboard of his car as it came fairly slowly down the street to the hall—which I did. It was, in fact, as it turned out, very easy to do.

I leant in at the open window; Mr. Asquith, looking pale, shrank back into the far corner of the car. We gazed at each other, I a little dazed at having succeeded so easily; he, leaning back into his corner, looking white and frightened and rather like a fascinated rabbit. I think he must have suspected me of secreting some weapon. My plan, so far as it went, had undoubtedly succeeded, save perhaps for one point. Did I or did I not say to him (as it was, of course, my first duty to say to him), "Votes for Women, Mr. Asquith!"? I trust that I did, but I have never been able to remember for certain. My associates, having regard to the fact that I was still in those days a silent and very shy young woman, who did not find it easy to speak to strangers



even under the most promising circumstances, were, I fear, inclined to the view that no word had passed. Well, perhaps it had not; that is one of the things that I shall never know. . . .

What is certain is that within a few seconds the car had slowed down at the hall door and I had been pulled off the step by the indignant crowd, who knew nicely what I was after. I found Miss G—— by my side. We turned away to walk down South Street towards the West Port in the direction of our lodgings, and the crowd, some hundreds of it, mostly youths, surrounded and followed us. They got nastier and nastier as they realised how completely we were at their mercy. Our hats were torn off, our hair was pulled down (Miss G—— had lovely frizzy red hair which reached to her waist), our clothes were torn, things were getting unpleasant. We did not dare go back to our lodgings; the crowd would almost certainly have broken the windows, which would have come hard on our friendly landlady. Just after we had passed Bell Street we decided to stop and, using the edge of the high pavement for a platform, to hold a meeting and see if we could get the situation in hand that way. It proved a mistake. We were neither of us good speakers, and it would have taken a Mrs. Pankhurst to have held that crowd just then. Once we stood still they got bolder; the ones behind us began prodding and pinching us. But in almost every crowd, however much most of it dislikes you, there are a few kindly people whom you can count on to help you if you get into a fix. There were in this one. They took the shape of three St. Andrews caddy boys, who formed a bodyguard round us to prevent the attacks from the rear, and gave us much good advice. "Come and take refuge in the station," they said, and we went—but the station was closed. "If,"

said the caddy boys, "we run down the path to the lower road, we'll shake them off." Hand in hand with the caddies we fled down the path, and we outdistanced the crowd a bit, but it was not far behind. In a few minutes everything would have been as bad as before—indeed, worse, for once you have started running you have put up the hunting instinct in the crowd.

Suddenly we saw standing hospitably open the great doors of "Rusack's," the biggest and smartest hotel in St. Andrews (where all the golfing folk stay), and, still accompanied by our treasures of caddies, we dashed up the steps and in. We must have looked really indescribably unsuitable to that *milieu*, hot and panting, with our clothes torn, our hatless heads, and our hair hanging in dishevelled masses about our shoulders. I remember that the lounge was full of comfortable, leisurely, well-dressed hotel guests in evening clothes, but I cannot remember noticing how they reacted to our appearance. What I do remember, and shall remember to my dying day, is that everyone in authority in that hotel, from the hall porter to the proprietor, welcomed us with open arms, and that their one concern was to make sure that we took shelter with them until we were perfectly safe from the crowd. I do trust they lost no visitors through it—apart from the fact that we were at that moment the two most unpopular young women in St. Andrews, our appearance was certainly no credit to any decent establishment.

The crowd, stupid as crowds are, continued to wait for us by the street door of the hotel. The caddies, slipping out of the opposite door, which gives on to the golf links, made scouting expeditions to find out whether it would be possible for us to return to our lodgings by the back way without being seen. They returned saying that it would. So we tiptoed out with them on to the golf links, and,

speaking in whispers, keeping to the shady sides of the moonlit streets, they escorted us safely back to our lodgings.

I got back to Llanwern late one evening a week or so afterwards; and over a supper of bread and honey in my father's study retailed the affair to a couple of highly entertained parents. There were many families in those days in which the militancy of the women caused bitter divisions. But ours was never one of them. The fact that my father was actually a Liberal Member of Parliament might have been expected to present its problems, but somehow it seldom seemed to.

My mother, who though she has a conscience like a rock is good at tactful compromise, always managed to work loyally for him during election time, though she did have her occasional difficulties in combining her loyalty to all sides. During one election (I think it must have been that very same one) my father went down with influenza, and she—very good at making the short, friendly, just a few words type of speech—had to appear at all his meetings to apologise for his absence. At one of them one of the Under-Secretaries of the recent Ministry was to be the star turn. When the speakers reached the crowded hall they saw seated in a prominent position in the front row a couple of well-known local suffragettes. My father's agent was much perturbed and decided to have them turned out. My mother took him aside and pointed out to him quietly that this was unnecessary, as the orders of the W.S.P.U. (whose word with all its members was law) were that only Ministers of Cabinet rank were to be interrupted. However, he much fussed, and heartily loathing all suffragettes, was not convinced, and preferring to be on the safe side said that he would have them ejected all the same. "If you

do," said my mother, "I walk off the platform." They remained.

But certainly the chief credit for the fact that suffrage caused no trouble in our family was due to my father. He had a knowledge of the art of living—at least, with those with whom he meant to live at peace—which I have not often seen surpassed. And he had far too high a regard for the rights of the individual to suppose that he could dictate other people's views to them. Moreover, even though theoretically he was entirely opposed to militancy, he was after all a born fighter himself, and the natural man in him could not help rather enjoying some of our exploits. A cutting which appeared in the diary of the *South Wales Echo and Express* only a year or so ago illustrates, I think, something of the way in which he took the business:

"In November, 1913, poor C. F. G. Masterman addressed a Liberal mass meeting in the Central Hall, and D. A. was put up to propose a vote of thanks.

"In those days the Suffragettes were ubiquitous, and there had been one or two slight interruptions.

"‘Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,’ said D. A., ‘this has been a wonderful evening. When I go home I shall have the pleasure of telling my wife and daughter—both of whom are at present out of prison—what a treat they have missed.’ Those last six words were lost in a great shout of laughter, and D. A.’s eyes twinkled with sheer enjoyment. There was always a touch of impishness in him.”

## CHAPTER XII

### PRISON

WHEN I decided to ask Christabel Pankhurst to speak at that first Temperance Hall meeting at Newport I wanted to have her to stay with me. But my husband objected. We argued the matter laughingly for some time, and finally he said he would agree to her coming if I, on my side, would promise never to go to prison. In those early days when scarcely anyone had gone to prison; when one supposed (as we younger ones did all the time) that the vote would pretty certainly be granted within the next few months or so; and when I had only just joined the movement and only just married, it never occurred to me as a serious possibility that I should need to go to prison, whereas to get Christabel to stay with me seemed important. I agreed cheerfully. At the time I did not take the thing very seriously. It was a laughing bargain.

But although in fact it was Mrs. Pankhurst, not her daughter, who came down to speak, and she stayed at Llanwern and not at our house, my husband remained convinced that a bargain had been made. As the years sped on and the vote remained unwon it irked me more and more, and I felt very much ashamed of not being able to take my fair share in the movement for which other people were giving so much and in which I believed to the bottom of my heart. However, nothing that I could say would make my husband release me from my promise.

I reflected on the matter. I might have promised not to

go to prison, though I was not myself absolutely clear on that, since the terms of the bargain had never been carried out: I had never promised not to break the law. And when later militancy grew to be of a different kind and people were expected to help in such work as burning down buildings or setting fire to letters in pillar boxes, it seemed to me that it would be straining things too far if I allowed my promise to prevent me taking the comparatively small risk of being caught which such acts of militancy involved. So I began to take what quiet share I could in them. I am bound to admit that I said nothing of this to my husband or to my family.

I am not saying that I was justified. I am not sure whether I was or not; though the risk did seem slight, since the percentage of people who were caught, when they did not mean to be, was very small. If I had to do it over again to-day, I think that I should tell the person concerned that a half-laughing promise, made without full knowledge of the circumstances, was not one that he was justified in making me keep indefinitely, and that if he would not release me I proposed to break it. But what I should do now is, after all, beside the point. I am a totally different person now from what I was twenty years ago. Certainly I am bound to admit that—rightly or wrongly—to-day, when I look back, the thing which shames me is not that I broke my promise in so far as at last I did, but that I did not much earlier refuse to abide by it.

I should like, of course, to be able to write that in all my life I had never given a promise that I regretted, or endangered by one iota the keeping of a promise once given, and yet had, at the same time, taken my fair share in the risks and discomforts of the cause for which others were cheerfully giving their health and lives. In fact, I should

like to feel, looking back over my life, that I had always behaved perfectly. Unfortunately I cannot.

Various small acts of militancy had been performed by our local branch, but we had not done anything very spectacular or been particularly successful. I decided that we had better try burning letters. As it happened, burning letters was the one piece of militancy of which, when it was first adopted, I had disapproved. I could not bear to think of people expecting letters and not getting them. I had come round to it very reluctantly, partly on "the end justifies the means" principle; but chiefly on the ground that everyone knew we were doing it and therefore knew that they ran the risk of not getting their letters; and that it was up to the public to stop us if they really objected, by forcing the Government to give us the vote.

However, when it came to the point it was obvious that in the case of a local district, at some distance from headquarters, burning the contents of pillar boxes had, tactically, much to recommend it. Acts which shall damage property without risking life and which shall not involve the certain risk of being caught are, as anyone who has tried them knows, very much more difficult to perform than they sound. Even to cut a telegraph wire, when it has to be done secretly on a moonless night, and when one considers that telegraph wires are frequently to be reached only across hedges and ditches, are almost always above one's reach, and that an ordinary wire-cutter has little or no effect upon them, is a very difficult thing for the novice to attempt. Setting fire to letters in pillar boxes was amongst the easiest of the things we could find to do, although, as I was presently to discover, even that presents its difficulties if one is well known in the locality. So one summer's day I went off to

Clement's Inn to get the necessary ingredients. I was given, packed in rather a flimsy covered basket, twelve long glass tubes, six of which contained one kind of material and the other six another. So long as they were separate all was well, but if one smashed one tube of each material and mixed the contents together, they broke, so it was explained to me, after a minute or two into flames. I carried the basket home close beside me on the seat in a crowded third-class railway carriage, and the lady next door to me leant her elbow from time to time upon it. I reflected that if she knew as much as I did about the contents she would not do that.

Having got the stuff home, I buried it in the vegetable garden under the black-currant bushes, and a week or so later, dug it up and took it one day into the Newport Suffragette Shop to explain to the other members of committee what an easy business setting fire to pillar boxes would be for us all to practise in our spare moments. They were uncommonly reluctant to be convinced. Nothing, I assured them, could be safer or easier; one pushed the two tubes in, as one passed the letter box, smashing them on the inside edge of the letter box as one let them drop. It looked to other passers-by exactly as if one were posting a letter. How simple! They were much impressed, but they could none of them see it in quite that way. And I could think of no better method of convincing them of the ease of the operation than by posting the first tubes myself. In any case, as secretary of the local Society I felt it to be rather my duty to lead off.

The thing proved a good deal more complicated than I had supposed. My heart was beating like a steam engine, my throat was dry, and my nerve went so badly that I



made the mistake of walking several times backwards and forwards past the letter box before I found courage to push the packets in. Then, as they were rather bulky, I had to force them a bit before they would drop. . . . When I had finished I collected the basket from the Suffragette Shop, carried it home again and re-buried it under the black-currant bushes.

Nothing happened for a week or so, but many rumours flew about. I cannot remember now how the knowledge that I was suspected first came to me, but I do know that on the afternoon when I was arrested I was not at all surprised. I was driving our little open car down the hill from our house when two policemen stepped out across the road and stopped me, saying that I was arrested. I asked to see their warrant, as we were all taught to do in the W.S.P.U. It was in order. Our house was some five miles from Newport, and neither I nor the policemen could think of any quicker method of reaching the police station than of my driving the pair of them back there, which I did.

When I reached the station I was told that I could write a note to anyone I wished, to ask him to come and bail me out. I wrote two—one to my husband and (as I knew he had gone over to a puppy-show a good many miles away and that it might take some while to reach him) another to my Aunt Lotty, who now lived in a cottage a few miles from Newport. I was then locked up in a cell. It was a dark and a very dirty cell. Someone had been sick down one of the walls, and it smelt like an urinal. I remained there, very bored, for some four hours. When I was finally let out I found waiting for me in the Chief Constable's room both my husband and my aunt. It appeared that my aunt had been there two hours already, but that the Chief Constable had refused to allow her to go bail for me, and

had insisted on waiting for my husband. Whether he had in this matter exceeded his powers I do not know. My aunt thought that he had, and had told him so in no uncertain terms—the atmosphere between them was uncommonly strained by the time I arrived. He explained later that he had wanted to keep me in as long as possible, as he had thought that four hours in the cells would so put the fear of God into me that I should never want to misbehave again.

When the three of us got out on to the pavement outside the police station my husband turned to me: "Did you do it, Tommy?" he asked aloud. "Shut up, you fool," whispered my aunt urgently; "of course she did."

The time between that moment and the trial was distinctly unpleasant. My own people were in America at the time. It was not to be expected that my husband's people would welcome such an exploit on the part of their eldest son's wife. And though they showed amazing self-control and treated me with absolute kindness, gentleness and consideration, and with great generosity, throughout the whole affair, as did also my husband, it was impossible not to know and to feel unspoken in the atmosphere all the horror that it seemed to them.

As the trial drew near it became fairly certain that I should be given the option of a fine. My husband and I discussed the matter *ad nauseam*. He took the line that in view of my promise I must pay the fine and not go to prison at all. I, on the other hand, whilst I admitted that he had the right to take that view if he chose, felt that it would be very bad indeed for the movement in our part of the country if I did not go to prison, and that I should be letting down the suffrage cause badly. Finally, I persuaded him to let me go—anyway for a bit. Then we had a further

long argument on the question of hunger striking. Here again I felt that it would be very bad for our local organisation if I failed to carry out what had by then come to be regarded as the usual suffragette procedure in prison. I was in a stronger position here, for I had made no promise, and finally he agreed to that too.

Of the actual police court proceedings I do not remember very much. There were a lot of people in the court. My father and mother, who had by this time returned, were there, of course. Not that my father evinced any great enthusiasm for the whole affair, but he was as certain as was my mother to stand by one in any difficult circumstances; and, so far as that goes, had wired from America offering to try to get Tim Healy to defend me. But seeing that I did not particularly want to get off, that would have been rather waste.

As for my mother, I cannot remember her making the faintest objection to what I had done; she was, in fact, rather indignant with my father for not being pleased about it; and the only noticeable effect that it had on her was that she went off and got arrested herself, in London, a few months afterwards.

In court I pleaded a formal "Not guilty," as that was what the W.S.P.U. enjoined on everyone who was taken up, but I made no special effort to pretend that I had not done the thing. (The letters, by the way, had scarcely been burnt at all. Perhaps the currant bushes had been bad for the test tubes.)

I was, of course, found guilty ("one month with the option of a fine," I think it was) and sent off to the county gaol at Usk. As a suffragette I was—provided I behaved myself—allowed certain privileges, amongst which the most important were that I might wear my own clothes and take in

some books of my own. Hunger striking, of course, was not behaving oneself, but no one could tell if one was going to do that until one got there, although the authorities had had a pretty good idea that I intended to and before I left Newport the Chief Constable did his best to get an assurance out of me that I would eat.

My cell looked into the inner courtyard of the prison; it was quite clean and well lighted—as cells go I had nothing against it. The Governor, a kindly-looking elderly man, who seemed rather worried at having me there, came to see me directly I arrived and inquired whether I meant to hunger strike or not. He was, he said, about to go off on his annual holiday, but if I intended to break the prison rules, he could not possibly leave the prison; he must stay and deal with the situation himself—and he very much wanted his holiday, as he had made all his arrangements. I said that I did intend to hunger strike, but that I saw no reason whatsoever why he should forgo his holiday on that account, as I felt convinced that the head warder would be amply capable of looking after me; and after some argument I persuaded him to take his holiday, and he went off.

Then the chaplain came to see me. He was the only unpleasant person in the whole prison (the warders were all pleasant, kindly folk—though they were supposed to pretend not to be), and began not merely by abusing me and all suffragettes, which was perhaps to be expected, but by abusing my father too. I lost my temper on the spot, and we went at it hammer and tongs. But he had the more advantageous position, since he was free to leave the cell and I was not, so that he could get in the last word and then retreat quickly, which to the best of my recollection he did, though I cannot now remember what the last word was.

Finally the doctor, a pleasant, friendly man, arrived. He

did his best to carry out his instructions. He told me that if I hunger struck I should have to be forcibly fed. No one, however, could have supposed that he meant it. Clearly he had been instructed to threaten me. Possibly he had also been told if need be to carry out his threat, but quite obviously the bare idea of doing so filled him with such disgust and horror that I was in no danger of anything of the sort so long as I remained under his charge. His own feeling in the matter, for all his gallant attempt at carrying out officially his official instructions, was so entirely transparent that I was able, without any fear of consequences at all, to put a bold face on the matter, which I accordingly did.

I had made up my mind that I would not touch food whilst I was in prison. I had further decided that in order to hurry on the time when I should be weak enough to be let out I would refuse drink for as long as I could; but would take it if and when I found my thirst unendurable.

I disliked prison extremely, out of all proportion to its actual circumstances, as it seems to me looking back. After all, one had a clean, light cell and books to read. I cannot imagine why I hated it so much. I only know that I did. I daresay the effect of taking no food (though I cannot say I found this at all seriously difficult) was to string up one's nerves and make what ought not to have been a particularly unbearable thing quite horrible. What I hated, so far as one can put it into words, was the loneliness and the sense of being shut up in a tiny cell. I remember watching the sparrows chirping and fussing about in the courtyard and thinking that what made them so happy was that they were free, and vowing to myself that never so long as I lived would I keep a bird in a cage. And I remember also reflecting that people who imposed the punishment of prison did

not know what they were imposing, and that every magistrate ought to serve a sentence of at least two weeks before he was allowed to qualify as a J.P. When, however, I was myself made a magistrate, which happened eight or nine years later (oddly enough, I was sworn in at the court adjoining Usk Gaol), I made no attempt to put my theory into practice.

At first I used to go to chapel every morning. I enjoyed that. It broke the monotony a bit—more than exercising in the prison yard did. For I was given my exercise alone, but chapel with its hymn-singing I shared with all the other prisoners. However, after the first three days they declared, much to my disappointment, that I was too weak to go to chapel or to exercise, and I just lay all day on my bed—quite the hardest thing in beds that I had ever imagined. I had taken in with me Morley's "Life of Gladstone" and a volume containing famous speeches of famous men, but out of the prison library I borrowed novels by Edna Lyall, and after a day or so in prison these were what I really felt like reading. The difficulty, however, about the prison library was that if you broke the rules you forfeited the right to use it. That might not have mattered if the Governor had been there. I was, in spite of my hunger strike, still allowed by the head warden to retain my own clothes and my own books, which, strictly speaking, I had by my disobedience forfeited; but unfortunately the chaplain was left in charge of the library whilst the Governor was away, and he was all against letting me have any pleasure he could keep from me. The idea of cutting off supplies from the library occurred to him about the third day. So Edna Lyall ceased. Instead, I played noughts and crosses against myself on the slate with which my cell was provided.

I did not feel particularly hungry, but I did get terribly

thirsty. By the end of three days I had reached the stage when I had difficulty in restraining myself from drinking the contents of the slop pail. Incidentally I was perceptibly weaker, and it seemed clear that the prison doctor was aware of this. So at that point I took some water, and promptly got quite strong and well again. It was extraordinary the difference that water made. I did, however, begin to get rather bad heartburn. The prison doctor, who came every day and with whom by this time I had made very good friends, offered me medicine; but I doubted whether the W.S.P.U. would have allowed that, for it seemed to me that under the guise of giving medicine it might be quite possible to feed a person for some while, so I refused his medicine. And at the end of five days they let me out. I imagine that I could have been kept twice or three times that length of time without much danger to myself. But I lived very near Usk, and I suppose the prison authorities did not wish to take any risks with me.

It was uncommonly pleasant to be back in the real world again. I went straight home and to bed for a day. It was the middle of summer, and though a thirst strike seems to leave one extraordinarily depressed (and as yellow as a guinea), it was just pure joy to lie on the stock-scented terrace in our garden.

My husband, meanwhile, had become somewhat exercised in his mind about the glass tubes, and when I explained that they were still under the black-currant bushes (in the excitement of going to prison I had forgotten all about them), we decided that it might be as well to destroy them; for it had by then become only too clear that the result of my attempt to show the local W.S.P.U. how safe it was to burn letters was going to be that not one of them would for months

venture on the faintest scrap of militancy. So Humphrey went off and dug up the basket and threw it into an underground rain-water tank, whereupon it came open and all the test tubes floated gaily up to the top. So he took his rifle and spent a happy morning shooting them, but, through the small opening of the tank, that was not too easy, and it was quite a long while before he got rid of the last.

I had been imprisoned under the Cat and Mouse Act and should normally have been re-arrested as soon as I had recovered, to serve a further term. However, my fine was paid just before I was due to go back.

\* \* \* \* \*

The truth is that it was almost the done thing in our family to go to prison. Florence Haig, though loathing every minute of it, went at such intervals as she could afford to spare from her own trade of portrait painting. Her sisters Cecilia and Eva Haig were both arrested.

Aunt Janetta, undeterred by the silent disapproval of her daughters ("It's no use protesting to mother about it," said they, "she'd go straight off and throw herself into the arms of the nearest policeman just to show her independence"), went most regularly, never less than once a year. Though she loathed the process of getting there, she did not seem to mind the actual incarceration so much as did most. She could, it appeared, wash all her own clothes almost as satisfactorily inside prison as she could at home. She used to dry her handkerchiefs on the window panes of the prison cell to give them an ironed look. She always had some new theory going; the toadstool idea had, perhaps luckily, disappeared fairly quickly, but it was succeeded by others, and she propagated whatever happened to be the latest of these with immense zeal among the other Holloway suffragettes.



Certainly to everyone who went there intentionally one of the most unpleasant parts of prison was the getting there. To take part in a raid on the Houses of Parliament might very well mean to be battered, bruised, insulted for hours around the precincts of Westminster, and then fail to get arrested in the end. The older women dreaded it almost intolerably. Later on, when the W.S.P.U. introduced stone-throwing, the thing became much simpler and less torturing. That, indeed, was largely why they introduced the stone-throwing policy. Still, even then it required an almost unbelievable effort of will before a woman brought up with all the inhibitions of the decent Victorian "lady" could bring herself to throw stones through a street window. The women who did it broke more than windows with their stones; they broke the crust and conventions of a whole era. The well-to-do young woman of to-day might not find it easy to put a stone through a London shop window, but she lives in a world (made partly by those stone-throwing women) to which the thing is infinitely less impossible than it was to those who did it.

Aunt Janetta, carrying a small and unobtrusive parcel, which was in fact a hammer done up in brown paper, strolled down Oxford Street. She was a beautiful woman (she remained beautiful to the day of her death, only a few years ago), with soft curly hair and a very gentle and spiritual face—the face of a saint—and she dressed well. It would have needed a wily policeman to identify her with the popular view of the Shrieking Sisterhood. Opposite the windows of D. H. Evans she stopped, and, murmuring to herself "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might," upped with the hammer and splintered the window. She told one of her daughters afterwards that it

had been almost impossible to strike that blow. The great plate-glass window looked so beautiful and well made that she could not bear to destroy it. However, she did it all the same, and then moved on to the next, and the next. Crash, crash went the hammer. Each time she struck she murmured the same text. Finally the policeman came up and arrested her.

She was let out on bail, and promptly went back to D. H. Evans to buy herself a hat there and thus make up to the firm for any inconvenience to which her action might have put them, for she was a most scrupulous woman. "It was I," she explained pleasantly to the shop assistant, "who broke your windows yesterday," and could not understand why that young woman from then on regarded her with suspicion.

She never did quite succeed in arriving at other people's point of view of the militant movement. After all, she argued, our demand was just; surely any right-thinking person must see that it was, and militancy was clearly the only way of getting it. So that was that. We held a garden party once at Llanwern with the object of converting the local clergy to suffrage. We did not hope (we had not quite Aunt Janetta's optimism) to convert them to militant suffrage. We asked an eloquent speaker from the Church League for Woman Suffrage to do the speaking and kept all talk of militancy discreetly in the background. At least, we all did except Aunt Janetta. She happened to be staying with us at the time, and asked me to introduce her to some of the clergy, and to each one as I introduced him she led off the conversation by holding out a friendly hand and saying cheerfully, "How do you do—I've *just* come out of prison. . . ."

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

There came at last a day when it was borne in upon an extremely reluctant Aunt Lotty that she too must find her way to prison. No one could have wanted to go less. I do not know that she looked forward to the actual procedure of getting herself arrested with all the horror that many did. She was a bit of a fighter after all, and not in the least afraid of crowds. And breaking conventions has never troubled her. No. Aunt Lotty's attitude towards prison was chiefly dictated by the fact that her existence centred largely round her garden, which she made with her own hands and was just then engaged in making, and that prison meant leaving that garden for at least a month. And it appeared—she did a lot of grumbling to all of us before her conscience finally goaded her into making up her mind—that the times chosen by the W.S.P.U. for its prison raids were selected altogether without reference to the feelings of garden lovers. It was never pleasant to leave one's garden to an inexperienced underling, but it could be done, it seemed, without actual damage to the garden if one went in December or August. But the W.S.P.U. never arranged a raid in August. Their raids, which had to take place when Parliament was sitting, were usually timed either for October, November, February or March. These, according to Aunt Lotty, were absolutely fatal times in which to absent oneself for a whole month from one's garden.

However, conscience finally conquered. She cast off her garden clogs, put on a tidy coat and skirt, and set off for London to take part in the raid which took place on November 18th, 1910, and came afterwards to be known as the "Black Friday" raid.

This was the last raid before the era of stone-throwing. It was the business of those who took part in it to walk from Caxton Hall across Parliament Square and try to enter

the Houses of Parliament through the Strangers' Lobby and present a petition to the Home Secretary. Everyone knew, of course, that no one taking part in it would have a chance of getting so far as the entrance to Parliament. What we did not know till later was that Winston Churchill, who was then Home Secretary, had decided on a new policy which he thought would terrorise the women into giving up the fight. It was alleged after the raid that he had arranged with the magistrate that if taken up they should be discharged without imprisonment, and that he had given orders to the police to treat them as brutally as possible, but to avoid arresting them if reasonably possible, and at all events not to do so until they had been thoroughly terrified and mishandled. To ensure that these orders should be carried out it was understood that he had had drafted into the Square a division of police from a bad part of the East End used to dealing pretty roughly with drunken brawls, substituting them for the A Division which normally attended to Westminster raids and were apt to deal gently with the suffragettes, whom they knew and rather liked.\* The idea was to avoid allowing the women the "martyrdom" of prison and at the same time to make the raid on Westminster such an intolerable, humiliating and unbearable thing that no woman who took part in it would ever face it again, and that the news of its horror would spread to other women and deter them from volunteering for prison.

It was a bright idea, if a trifle Churchillian, but it reckoned without two things—firstly the fact that the "martyrdom" of prison was never in any woman's mind an end in itself, but merely the means to an end—the vote; and, secondly,

\* Mr. Churchill officially denied all this. He declared, when closely questioned in Parliament by Lord Henry Cavendish Bentinck and others, that his orders had been misunderstood.

the fact that in the Pankhursts the W.S.P.U. had highly intelligent leaders, ready and able to answer tactic with tactic. . . . However, I am not concerned here to tell the story of the militant movement, but only of Aunt Lotty's going to prison.

I took a day off and went up to see my godmother safely into gaol, with a half-acknowledged private hope that, without deliberately breaking my promise, I might somehow accidentally get arrested myself—a hope which but for the Government's change of tactics would have had every chance of being fulfilled. Parliament Square is a large place; somehow—I do not now remember how—I missed Aunt Lotty. I spent the day watching the women press forward, and surging forward with them (the W.S.P.U. always asked sympathisers who did not actually intend to go to prison to be present in the Square as moral support and to help to make a favourably disposed crowd), and then getting pushed back. The tactics of the police seemed to be to let the women get to a certain point in the Square, then to catch hold of them, two policemen to each woman, and, gripping and twisting arms and wrists, either to hurl them on to the ground or to run them right back, bruising and twisting their arms, till they were between the entrance to the Sanctuary and the place where Great Smith Street runs into the top of Victoria Street. There they left them, and the women, bruised and exhausted, rested for a few minutes before they wearily pressed forward again. I watched the police deal with one woman in particular, twisting her arms with violence till she cried out with the pain. It was horrible. I suddenly found myself swearing aloud in the street.

The raid went on all day. In the evening I went off, a trifle anxious, to find out how Aunt Lotty had fared. But I

need not have worried; I might have known she would look after herself all right. Her story was characteristic of her. Aunt Lotty had settled herself in a thick knot of the crowd on the edge of one of the pavements. A mounted policeman backed his horse into them to scatter them. Aunt Lotty gave the horse a hearty smack on the rump and it sprang forward. The policeman looked round angrily. "Don't do that," he said, "or the horse will kick you." "Oh no, it won't," said Aunt Lotty; "it's been trained not to." And she gave it another hearty smack.

What she said might be true, but it was not the kind of retort that the policeman either expected or desired from amongst the crowd. He regarded her with some disfavour as a focus point of trouble, and she was almost immediately arrested. The policeman who arrested her (he must have been an A Division man) apologised to her for having to do it. "Not at all," said Aunt Lotty genially, full of joy at having so easily obtained her objective; "I am doing my duty and you are doing yours." Mindful, perhaps, of instructions from headquarters, he made one last effort. "Now, look here," he said persuasively, "I'll let you go if you'll just promise to go off home." "If you let me go," retorted my aunt, "I shall go straight back amongst the horses again. I shan't want to, but I'll have to." He gave it up, and they marched off amicably together to Scotland Yard. The next day she was had up in court and discharged with a caution, and within forty-eight hours of leaving it she was back in her garden. The official plan had suited her book to perfection.

\* \* \* \* \*

Presently my mother also made up her mind to go to prison. She made it up with extreme reluctance. It was a

far harder thing for her to do than it had been for Aunt Lotty. She is naturally very much more concerned to observe the usual social practices. To get mixed up in a street brawl, to be taken up by the police, to be treated in gaol as a common malefactor (or as near that as the authorities, who fought all the time something of a losing fight against their own knowledge that we were nothing of the sort, could manage to go), was against every fibre of her being. Her natural conventionality was reinforced by the fact that whereas fate had allowed Aunt Lotty to lead a peaceful life inside her garden, it had forced my mother, who would have asked nothing better than to do the same, to take some share in the social side of the political world and to spend a good part of her life in places where the conventions mattered.

Although my father was by this time no longer in Parliament, he had been a Member for twenty years, and my mother's acquaintances were naturally largely drawn from amongst Liberal political circles. Anything more unpopular in those circles than going to prison in the interests of woman suffrage it would have been impossible to conceive. Nor was my father very encouraging. He did, in fact, everything he could to dissuade her. And his opinion naturally carried a good deal of weight. He was opposed to the militant movement on principle (just as he was opposed to the action of the Passive Resisters against the Education Act of 1902, although he had himself disapproved of the Bill), since he strongly disapproved both of breaking the laws of the land and of using force; and he was opposed to it on personal grounds because he thought it would be bad for his own career to have a prison-tainted wife, and incidentally unpleasant for my mother herself to go to prison.

He felt so strongly about it that about the time her decision was imminent he took to doing all sorts of unusual things.

As witness the day when, having, a short while earlier, left my mother still dressing in their bedroom, to allow himself his usual ten minutes for eating his breakfast before catching the train for Cardiff, he returned before starting. "Have you forgotten something?" inquired my mother, surprised. No, he had forgotten nothing; he had merely come back to say good-bye before leaving for the train. My mother gazed at him in some amusement. They were an affectionate couple, but in all the years of their married life he had never yet returned to say good-bye before catching his train. She knew nicely, before he somewhat sheepishly explained further, why he had come back.

My mother was a devoted wife: it was against every principle she held in the world (and to do him justice against every principle of my father's too) to be—against her own conviction—an obedient one. She disliked breaking the common conventions, but she disliked even more disobeying her own conscience, and, once she has decided that a thing is right, nothing in the world can ever shake her. Presently she made up her mind that however much she dreaded it she must go to prison. But a further difficulty stood in her way. She disapproved of stone-throwing and every other act of violence. The only reason for which she would consent to go to prison was for being arrested in the pursuance of some quite peaceful avocation. But the W.S.P.U. (to which, by the way, she never actually belonged) had—after the Black Friday business—ceased to organise deputations to Westminster. If one now joined in a W.S.P.U. raid one had to throw stones. My mother, nothing daunted, decided to stage her own exploit for herself. She collected (with the assistance of Prid, who came to stay and help organise the affair) a number of other people who also wished to register a prison protest, but who also



disapproved of stone-throwing. A cousin—Katherine Haig—came with her, and a number of men who sympathised with the movement (Mr. Lansbury, Mr. Nevinson and Mr. Brailsford were, I believe, amongst them). They agreed that they would hold a meeting under the statue of Richard Cœur-de-Lion close by the public entrance to Parliament. To hold an open-air meeting within a mile of Westminster is against the law. They duly attempted to hold their meeting; several of them were duly arrested, let out on bail, had up in court, severely scolded by the magistrate, asked if they had anything to say in their own defence, told that they were to be given one month's imprisonment with the option of a fine of £5, asked if they would pay the fine, and, on their refusal, sent off to the cells below the court. A short while later they were recalled and the sentence was altered to one day's imprisonment, in other words, to being kept down in the cells till the rising of the court—which rose at once.

It was on Ash Wednesday that the trial took place. It fell that year on February 25—my mother's birthday. My father, who never bore one any grudge if one decided against taking his view, attended the court with me. "I felt very proud of your old mother," he said on coming out; "she answered the magistrate very well indeed"—and, in fact, once the thing had happened, I believe he did feel rather proud. At all events he was far from attempting any concealment, though whether this policy was based on pride or on one of his own favourite sayings, "Always confess freely what is already known," one could not be absolutely certain. But I think the pride was genuine, for I remember that he shortly afterwards gave her an emerald and paste cross to commemorate the event, and that was rather a noticeable thing for him to do. He seldom gave jewellery.

PART III  
MY FATHER'S WORLD



## CHAPTER XIII

### IN SOME SENSE TRAGEDY

My father was not in early days a very parentally inclined father. Perhaps it would be true to say that he was never a very parentally inclined parent, and perhaps that was to me some of the source of his fascination. "Margaret and I," said he, "are not like father and daughter; we are butties." He was an ideal "butty." When I look back now across my life the days I spent with him are amongst the most glamorous that I can remember, and certainly of all the purely personal influences that have come into my life his has been the greatest.

It grew as the years went on. When at four years old I was asked which parent I loved best and, seeing that they were both in the room and that I did not want to hurt anybody's feelings, replied cautiously that I loved them both "ekally," I knew in my four-year-old heart that I lied; for I was not really very much interested in my father then. I do not remember that even at ten he meant very much to me; but at twenty he meant a very great deal; and at thirty we were far closer companions than we had been when I was twenty, and he was a much bigger part of my life. The facts that I went into business with him and that after my marriage I lived within a few miles of my old home partly accounted for this, no doubt. He was not the kind of man within whose orbit any young person could come and remain unaffected.

Although obviously he influenced enormously one's whole attitude towards life—and did occasionally speak from

experience—he gave one very little definite advice. He was in his own mind much too much on an equality with one for that. Who was he that he should know better than any other intelligent person what was best to do or think?

As a father he was undoubtedly a liberal education. I brought every new idea, every new book I read, everything that interested me to him. There were no limits set to our discussions. They might range over any subject in heaven and earth. Apart from these discussions, in which he listened at length to what one had to say, most of any conversation with him was usually taken up by the other party in listening—listening most usually to a discourse about his latest play in politics or business, or sometimes (but this I am bound to say I found a little boring) listening to a discourse on the heredity of Hereford bulls, to the particular points to breed for, and—with some reference to the Mendelian theory in which he was much interested—how this should best be done, and, further, what prizes he might expect to win with his own cattle at the next show. If he was boring one, however, he knew it in a second—I, for instance, probably heard less than any other member of his acquaintance about Hereford bulls. He was extraordinarily adaptable in his talk. He would instinctively choose for each person the subject that interested both him and them.

An instance of this comes back to me. In 1918, when he died—he was only sixty-two—I talked to many of the men who had known him intimately, and I found that each group held—and held with complete conviction—an entirely different view of what he had intended to do after the war had he lived.

Politicians and Press men believed that he wished to stay in politics and make good there.



VISCOUNT RHONDDA



Doctors believed that his great aim was to have the building of the Ministry of Health.

Business men believed that he was only longing for the moment when he could shake red tape and political dust from his feet and return to the enthralling schemes of big business.

Americans believed that his future life would have been spent more on that side of the water than this.

Men of a Labour complexion inclined to the theory that had it been possible he might have liked to continue in politics as a free-lance representing the point of view of Labour in the House of Lords.

His bailiff believed that what he really yearned for was to cut off all outside interests and live at peace on his farm with the Herefords.

The fact is probably that he wanted to do all these things, and instinctively, unconsciously, and most typically, dilated in each different case upon the one with which his hearer was most in sympathy. But which did he really want to do most? Heaven knows!

When I heard those men talk and thought of the man as he had been that last year, told by his doctor (he had angina pectoris) that his heart could bear the strain of no hard work, yet working at full pitch with that look on his face that men get when, hidden underneath all conscious denial, lies the knowledge in their hearts that the end comes quickly near; when I thought of him as he had been during those last three months of illness when morning after morning he would try to force himself to attend to that great official bag from the Ministry of Food which he insisted on having sent down daily to Llanwern, and time after time, tired out, would drop asleep as he worked, and force himself awake again to go on, I marvelled at the vitality, the school-



boy courage of the man who could have spoken so to them all.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Certain things stood out in him: his intense vitality, his spontaneous joy of life, his absolute simplicity, and his objective sense of justice about all things. He was interested—enthralingly interested—in whatever he took up, simply because he would never have looked at it had it not attracted him; never in his life because it was the correct thing to be interested, nor because other people were, nor because it was the fashion. Whatsoever his hand found to do he did with all his might. The things which were not worth so doing he simply ignored. In fact, whether work or play, everything was done for the same one simple reason, because he enjoyed doing it. Therein lay half the secret of his success. He might be searching for an owl's nest in the woods, reading "Pepys' Diary" or some new book on economics, playing bridge, walking round his cattle with his bailiff, concluding a business deal, or discussing his affairs at home; whatever it was he was entirely and zestfully absorbed in it. If he had not been absorbed he would not have been doing it. He wasted no time whatever either in talking to people or in doing things which only tepidly interested him.

I have never met a man so free from all priggishness and tendency to pose. He never posed to anyone, not even to himself. This is not to say that he was not interested in himself; he had his full normal share of vanity—was always delighted with praise, provided it was genuine (it was no use laying it on with a trowel; he knew the false from the true better than do most men), and would repeat it at home with immense satisfaction. My mother used to declare that he was really a very modest man; he was always so frankly

and surprisedly pleased at appreciation which one would have supposed he must have felt that he had a right to expect, and never seemed to grow used to it. I am inclined to think she was right. Modesty was certainly not, however, a virtue at which he aimed, if he ever consciously aimed at any virtue except loyalty and straightness. "Remember," he used to say, "that people always take a man at his own valuation." He had no use for a man who was always apologising for his own stupidity; he assumed that such a one was probably right.

It was perhaps part of the simplicity of which I have spoken that, as I have said in an earlier chapter, he never patronised. For some reason which I do not quite follow it never fed his vanity to patronise. He was, as I have suggested, as fond of having his vanity stroked as any other man—but patronising did not do it; and the idea of patronising intelligence, however inexperienced, would never have occurred to him. This made him a very pleasant companion to those whom he liked.

Since he got no pleasure from the sense of superiority to be had by consorting with people one despises, and since, as I have said, it was part of his simplicity and directness that he knew clearly what he liked and what he did not; and that he never did, if he could help it, anything that he disliked doing, it followed that outside business hours, and even inside them, he avoided people whom he regarded as unintelligent or pretentious, or in any other way boring, with great firmness.

If he disliked a man (is "to dislike a man" the right phrase? "To feel a distaste for him" is perhaps nearer. He owed him no kind of grudge) or thought him a fool—which came to much the same thing so far as he was concerned—he disliked to have him in the room; the man gave

him the same kind of feeling as a cat did. In later years he learned, however, to conceal his feelings fairly well. Several men who worked under him were quite unaware that he avoided having them near him, though his secretaries had orders to admit them as seldom as might be.

But undoubtedly relations with other people were sometimes complicated by these strong likes and dislikes, for he found it next door to impossible to work with a man for whom he had a real distaste. He had a vivid way of summing such a person up. I remember one of his political colleagues whom he described as "The kind of man who would steal a saucer of milk from a blind kitten," and yet I am not sure that he could have really been said to have entirely disliked that man, who was, after all, intelligent. "A dull, drab mediocrity," the phrase which he used to describe a well-known Cabinet Minister of the day, was an even more damning indictment so far as he was concerned.

A man with such strongly selective instincts and such a picturesque method of describing those whom he did not fancy was bound to make enemies as well as friends. He did. Especially in his youth. Not that this ever disturbed him. "A man who never makes enemies never makes anything else," he would declare, and go happily on his way.

It was the reverse side to this picture of him that, whenever he found people interesting, he had the knack of being friends with his acquaintances. Of these latter he had the most surprising numbers: a heterogeneous collection of men of every sort and condition and of every possible point of view, in every possible walk of life, from bishops to pub-keepers.

His own tastes were simple. On one occasion a big luncheon took place, and after most of the guests (including my father)

had left, a well-known Labour leader lingered on over a good cigar talking to a couple of friends. "Queer thing fate," he said; "there's Rhondda with the income of a duke and the tastes of a peasant, and me with the income of a peasant and the tastes of a duke." The story was carried back to my father, who much appreciated it. What he really had, of course, were the tastes of an adult, civilised, intellectually-minded man, which are not, fortunately, confined to any one section of the community.

He loved the sun and the open air. He used to sun-bathe regularly on the roof all through the spring and summer and even on into the late autumn, long years before it became the fashion. He always sat in the sun if he could. He loved the country too, and everything to do with it, and open-air exercise of all kinds, but particularly bicycling and hill-climbing. Often he would get up at six in the morning to walk round his farm before going off to his office. On Sundays he and four or five others of us who liked walking would take the car and go over to Abergavenny to be set down at the foot of the Sugar Loaf Mountain, which we would climb; or over to the foot of the Breconshire Beacons, another favourite climb; or, when the may was out, we would picnic on the road to Talgarth high up among the Black Mountains, where the country for a square mile was covered with may trees which looked like great lumps of sugar. We would climb the hill and come home at sunset.

He read a great deal—he would often sit up reading far into the night—but here again only what it amused him to read. I do not suppose that ever in his whole life he so much as glanced at a book merely because other people had read it, and he would feel foolish if he could not talk about it. In the result he was often curiously ignorant of a number of things of whose surface most people know something, be-

cause they would feel out of it if they did not. It would never have occurred to him to find out who were the fashionable writers of the day, still less to admire them when found; the desire to do the correct thing was entirely left out of him. He read chiefly economics, politics, heredity, coal, farming; sometimes history or biography. Occasionally he would lose himself in some such book as "Pepys' Diary," or one would find him re-reading Gray's "Elegy," or something of Shakespeare or Byron. His lighter literature consisted of detective stories.

He had a high opinion of business and was very fond of quoting Napoleon's saying, with the emphasis on the last half, which is usually forgotten, "The British are a nation of shopkeepers, *and the odd thing is that they are ashamed of it.*" Business, he would say, is much cleaner than politics. His own code was the merchant's code: One must be fair and just in all one's dealings. A bargain or a promise once made must be kept, whatever the consequence. There must be absolute loyalty to those one worked with, whether alongside, above or below. He gave it, exacted it, and almost always got it. He did not say much about his code, but he kept it to the letter, and looked puzzled and troubled if anyone he liked fell short of it.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was certainly one of the happiest and gayest people I have ever known, yet it seems to me that in a sense his life came close to tragedy—the only real tragedy; the tragedy of wasted capacity. It is true that in the end he was given a field in which he could stretch every one of his faculties to the full. He used his stored capital of brains and energy and experience to the utmost during the last nine months of his working life—and then he died. He had lived sixty-two

years. To the outward eye he had done much before the accident of war asked of him the use of all the faculties he possessed—nevertheless, but for that ghastly happening he would have gone to his grave with the thing he could give best of all—with the thing that from his youth he had wanted to give most—unwanted and unused.

He was one of the few rare instances of his type that in the end, by some accident, get through. That is why his story seems to me to be worth the telling. What very nearly happened to him, what in a sense *did* happen to him, must be happening to-day to many another man of his kind and quality—powers, for the very fact that they are big, going unused. The man who is capable of functioning at the top finds it uncommonly hard, at least in the political field, to get where he belongs. I doubt whether that difficulty really exists in an acuter form in a democracy than in any but an autocracy so ideal as to have small chance of existing, and certainly of surviving; but my father, who, though a radical, harboured few illusions about democracies, inclined to think that it does. "Democratic government," he wrote, in the days when democracy was still sacrosanct, "is at best the lesser of two evils. No one supposes that the many are necessarily imbued with supreme wisdom or that the judgment of the people is by any means always right. A standing weakness of democracy is that it is easily swayed and led by the fluent speaker rather than by the men of caution and capacity. Froth rises to the top, and the person who carries his brains in his tongue is the chosen leader."

He was perhaps unfortunate. When he left Cambridge (he had been the University Light-Weight champion boxer and had won a number of pots for sculling and rowing) with a degree in mathematics and an unquenchable interest

in economics and political science, which he was never to lose, he had already made up his mind to what he wanted to do. The thing that really interested him was the service of the State. One gets echoes of that again and again in his letters and in scraps of reported conversation that have come down from those early days.

My grandfather had died when he was still up at Cambridge, and he therefore found himself obliged to give up his plan of going to the Bar as a preparation for politics, since he was under the obligation of taking his share in the carrying on of the family business—a duty which was also a pleasure, for the South Wales Coalfield interested him immensely. But he had an income of some two thousand a year and he did not propose that this change of plan should impede him in his political career. There was indeed no reason why it should have done so.

Life opened out before him full of promise. He wanted to do big things. He felt that he could. He was one of those rather rare people who are intensely interested both in theory and in practice, who suffer from a perpetual itch to try and blend the two. He continually desired to test out theories in practice, to improve rule-of-thumb practice by the application of new theories. He asked for a field in which he could best do these things. And he asked—consciously or unconsciously—for one or two things more. . . .

He had been cradled in the Mill School of thought, had sucked in the Economic Man theory with his milk, and believed that the one prize that makes men work is the prize of money. He was not a deeply self-analytical person, and I do not know how far it occurred to him that in point of fact it was not chiefly for that prize that he worked himself. But all the same I should hesitate to say that his belief was altogether untrue so far as the majority are concerned.

The truth is that money does hold immense glamour for the average man who has started without it; but my father had had a sufficiency all his life, and money for its own sake held no very great interest for him. Power held more, but power alone was not enough. Power to do something, to make something, to produce order out of chaos, efficiency out of inefficiency, success out of failure—that held endless, inexhaustible glamour. The prize he really desired was the prize of being allowed to harness his full capacity to a task that seemed to him big enough to be worthy of achievement. And he desired also—yes, certainly he desired—the prize of success, of recognition. He loved praise almost as a child does, it was very sweet to him.

A curious paradox, by the way, that a man who in every conscious belief was before all things an individualist, whose every argument was based upon the individualist theory, had himself passionately wanted to follow not the individualist but the communal path. Curious that he did not himself begin to attempt to follow the purely individualist way (whose prizes were, he declared, the only ones big enough to keep men working) until he was fifty, and then only because the way he loved best had failed him. An interesting commentary partly on his own theories, partly, perhaps, also on the group's capacity for making use of the material at its disposal.

Clearly, it had seemed that he was destined for politics, but so soon as he began to tread the political path complications began. Since he was a Welshman, he found himself in Welsh politics. The hall-mark of Welsh politics in the 'nineties was parochialism. He found himself one of a small group of men who, a little half-heartedly, without the fervour of Irish feeling behind them, were trying to imitate



Irish methods: demanding Wales for the Welsh and Welsh Disestablishment . . . fussing about small sectional interests . . . discussing the possibility of reviving the Welsh language . . . founding the Cymru Fydd. My father was tepidly interested in Welsh Disestablishment, but definitely repelled by the parochialism of "Wales for the Welsh." "'The World is my Oyster' would be," said he, "a more intelligent motto." He was opposed, so far as he was interested in it at all, to the attempt to make a cult of the Welsh language, which seemed to him to be largely a pose, and an aim which was, in the first place, impossible of achievement; in the second, in so far as it was capable of being achieved, entirely mischievous. He wanted to make unity, not disunity; and he was asked to lend his energies towards creating more divisions and more sectionalism; towards emphasising the nationalism of a country the size of a pea, which did not, so he believed, really want it emphasised.

The word "internationalist" was not so much used in those days as it is now, but it was to that category that my father, for all his affection for his native place, instinctively belonged. Every instinct he had was international, and he found that the condition of making a successful career at Westminster lay in advocating the petty parochialism of "Wales for the Welsh." No wonder he failed. Nationalism was not a conception he ever really understood. Even during the war—when we were all prepared to do it—I have heard him say that he could not understand how any man could put his country before his sense of right and justice.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Welsh party of the 'nineties contained a considerable number of men of the mental calibre capable of taking all

this nonsense seriously; and one or two men who pretended to take it seriously because they saw in it the stepping-stone to high places, and realised that only through the war-cry of "Wales for the Welsh" and plenty of sob-stuff about "gallant little Wales" could they get the Welsh party behind them and use it to force them to the top of the tree.

They were quite right. That was obviously the game to play. My father had few illusions: he knew perfectly well that a man who could not pretend to take Welsh politics seriously could scarcely hope to climb the political ladder through the help of Wales. Why, then, it may be asked, did he not play the obvious game? He failed to play it for two reasons, of which the first was a fundamental inhibition. He could not do it. He was quite incapable of pretending to an enthusiasm he did not feel. In the second place, he had a kind of defect not uncommon in clever men. He might know intellectually that most men are fools and that in a democracy the politician must play up to their folly: temperamentally he never knew it, and so he could never act upon it. His speeches were always directed as to his equals in intellectual capacity and sincerity.

In his own constituency—that is to say, in a place where his own personality could constantly come into touch with that of his hearers—his method worked very well: it was, after all, flattering enough. Although he refused to canvass (not fair, he said, to expose a man to the temptation of making a promise he doesn't mean to keep), he was always elected top of the poll by huge majorities. But it was not a method that had much chance of carrying beyond the reach of his own personality. It might have carried, perhaps. Or at least his personality might have carried further (for four years, from 1894 to 1897, he held the South Wales Liberal Federation, of which he was President, against the glamour

of the emotional appeal of the Cymru Fydd for his own wholly intellectual ends) had he not chanced to belong to the same generation as Mr. Lloyd George. As the late Mr. Llewellyn Williams pointed out, "In those days the name of D. A. Thomas counted for more in South Wales, which contains three-fourths of the people of the Principality, than that of the future Prime Minister"—but for that very reason he was up against Mr. Lloyd George. For Mr. Lloyd George inclined to the view that there was no room for two kings in Wales, no chance for more than one man at a time to get pushed to the top in Welsh politics. He took all the necessary precautionary measures to ensure that he should be that one. My father made one attempt to work with him in 1894, but his spoon was not long enough for that supper, and he soon realised how impossible it was and gave it up. For twelve years the two men fought each other good and hard. But Mr. Lloyd George had a number of weapons in his armoury which were not of the kind my father knew how to use. And in any case it is probable that against the Welsh "huy!" of that marvellous magician his ineradicable habit of appealing to the cold intellect and logic of the situation would have been powerless.

There was a third thing which told against him. He had retained from school-boy days a fatal habit of indulging, whether in speech or in his numerous letters to the press, in back-chat. He could not forbear to tweak a tail or jump upon an outspread coat-tail.

He was always apt to be lured off the straight path that led to success by the chance of an amusing battle. . . . That was not for the want of good advice at home. My mother is a peace-loving woman. "It's not worth your while, David," she would protest when he insisted on

returning the fire of an attack from some quite insignificant quarter. Worth while or no, he had no intention of missing a chance of a fight; he only grinned and went off whistling to spend an enjoyable evening or so in his study making up his reply, bits of which would often be read aloud for our approval and suggestions.

It was not that he was in the least a naturally quarrelsome person. Neither inside the home nor inside the office was he that. On the contrary. He was a reasonable, a genial, and a sweet-tempered man. I have scarcely ever seen him lose his temper. He got on admirably with his immediate entourage. But pen-and-ink fights he never could resist. He filled columns of the local press with them, and he made a great many unnecessary enemies thereby. He himself bore no malice when the fight was over. But his victims did. When, for example, in writing to the local press about a Lloyd Georgian candidate whose Liberalism was of a very recent vintage and of whose choice he disapproved, he quoted *inter alia* the tag that

“A merciful Providence fashioned him hollow  
In order that he might his principles swallow,”

he probably made an enemy—several enemies, in fact. When he nicknamed a local Labour leader with a loud voice the “Big Trombone”; or wrote an open letter to a neighbouring political candidate regretting his own inability to take him seriously on the Coal Trade, he made trouble for himself each time. Yet he never could resist doing it. He was wrong, of course . . . it was a bad mistake. I do not think he ever in his life went out of his way to do harm to anyone, nor did he ever allow his personal feelings to prevent him from admitting and even advocating the just claim of a man to any post. Quarrelling was a luxury; it

must not be allowed to stand in the way of doing justice, which was a necessity. But it undoubtedly stood in the way of his own advancement. He wasted both time and energy upon it, made many unnecessary enemies, and acquired a reputation for being difficult, which in point of fact he was not.

As the years went on this habit—so often the mark of a man full of vitality without sufficient outlet—grew upon him. If he had been harnessed to full capacity he would not have done it, but he was not; he had much surplus energy, and he liked this kind of play. He began to give it up a bit during his later business years, but not until it was too late, not until he had shaken the dust of Westminster off his feet—not, in fact, until he had enough to do. At last, in 1916, when he took office, when he had a job that took all he had to give, he gave it up completely. “Quarrelling,” he declared, “is the luxury of youth.” “Never make an enemy where you can avoid it”—thus did the devil rebuke sin.

These were not the only things that impeded him. He was as a young man too shy and self-conscious to be a good speaker—he was, in fact, never a very good speaker, but in later years his vitality and personality shone through and informed a speech which was apt to be packed with a good deal more intellectual and very often economic and statistical meat than his hearers could reasonably be expected to swallow at a sitting. As a young man he had in marked degree another drawback common in youth; he was very shy and very proud, and consequently very prickly. And he never had the gift of getting on very well with his superiors. He lacked entirely the instincts of a courtier. His somewhat thorny pride made him unconciliatory and

contradictory. Even where he gave his unstinted admiration (he retained the faculty for occasional hero-worship to the end) his extreme shyness—which lasted well on into the thirties—led him to make the worst of himself, while his horror of putting himself forward was apt to lead to his disappearing altogether into the background. It is given only to the happy few to be equally at ease with their superiors, their equals and their subordinates. My father knew how to treat his subordinates. He treated them exactly as his own very sensitive pride would have demanded to be treated in a like relationship. It was a method which never failed. With his colleagues he was friendly and exceedingly loyal. But to the very end of his life he never learned how to deal with his official superiors. A bad drawback.

He had another serious disqualification for achieving office. He despised and avoided all social routine. It might have been supposed that his sociable wife might have helped him here. And no doubt to some extent she did. But there are limits to what one person can do to alter another one's habits; and, moreover, though my mother was happy enough at a dinner party, she was, as I have suggested, happier still among her own relations. And so, whilst other young politicians were taking the opportunity of getting to know their leaders socially, and therefore personally, he stayed in the background. That was a fatal mistake.

As the 'nineties drew on, it must have become more and more clear that the high hopes he set out with were destined to bear no fruit. He could have functioned at the top, and all the time he knew it. But—though he never realised it—he knew less than nothing of the art of climbing. Yet he did not easily relinquish the big hope of his life. All through the 'nineties he drifted through the lobbies eating

his heart out in a House that had no place for him. All through those years, all through his Parliamentary life indeed, he was never so much as made Chairman of Committee. Reading more and more detective stories, playing more and more chess, finding more and more pretexts for entertaining scraps, as often as not with men less well known than himself. (Was it not Lord Northcliffe who said: "Never fight a man less well known than yourself. You advertise him and he doesn't advertise you"?)

In 1900 came a General Election. He was then forty-four. He must have felt, as a man does in the forties, that it was then or never. He made a last try, took a fresh lease of energy and gave up all his directorates, in order to devote himself solely to politics. He had been opposed to the Boer War. Between 1900 and 1906 he strongly supported Campbell-Bannerman (for whom he had a deep admiration) against the Liberal Imperialist Group. In 1906, when the Liberal tide came in and his chosen leader became Prime Minister, it must have seemed as if his chance might come. But C. B. gave most of the plums of office to the men who had opposed him. To my father—who had at least one bad enemy at Westminster—he gave nothing. His Front Bench must, so he explained, consist of Parliamentary debaters of first rank.

That was really the end. My father stayed in Parliament for another four years, but in 1906 he resumed his directorships, and, taking the courage to turn away from the big hope of his life, threw all his force and energy into business. He was then fifty, and up till that time, for all the big reputation he had made for himself in local political and industrial circles, he had been, by his own standards, a failure.

It is not only in politics that parochialism is to be found. Parochialism, of a slightly different brand, is just as rife in industry. When my father came into business the South Wales Coalfield "was," says Mr. David Evans, the editor of the *South Wales Journal of Commerce*, "divided up into hundreds of separate colliery undertakings, nearly all owned and worked by separate companies in active competition with each other, and jealous of one another's prosperity. It was an industrial system composed in the main of petty businesses, lacking in all qualities of cohesion, and permeated by that distrust and envy usually characteristic of small industrial as of political communities under the sway of narrow parochial ideas, and either remote from, or hostile to, the influences of progressive thought and action. Moreover, it was as unimaginative as it was in the higher sense unprogressive." The result was inevitable: "The South Wales Coalfield in the 'nineties was a scene of more or less constant unrest, breaking out periodically into eruption in the form of strikes. Economically, conditions were most unsatisfactory, both from the standpoint of owners and men. . . . Capital and labour were in fact working on the margin of starvation."

To a man of my father's temperament such a condition of affairs was a challenge. True, he did not so much as own one colliery; he had a seventh share in one comparatively small colliery company and was numbered amongst its directors, but he was theoretically only actively concerned with the selling end of its business. But in business, as in politics, he saw, for he could no other, the thing as a whole. He began with infinite interest and delight to search for a cause and for a remedy for the ills of the South Wales Coalfield. After much research into the economics of the whole question he produced in 1896 a pamphlet entitled



"Some Notes on the Present State of the Coal Trade in the United Kingdom, with Special Reference to that of South Wales and Monmouthshire, together with a Proposal for the Prevention of Undue Competition and for Maintaining Prices at a Remunerative Level."

The pamphlet advocated combined action on the part of all the coalowners to put into effect a Control of Output Scheme with a view to maintaining prices. Each colliery was to be allotted its fair percentage of the agreed total production. If it produced in excess of its quota it was to contribute "a fixed amount on every ton of such excess as liquidated damages towards indemnifying those who produced short of their percentage quantities." My father stressed also the fact that it was essential that the men as well as the owners should be parties to the plan. The scheme was a good one—probably the only possible one for effectively keeping prices at a remunerative level during a bad period. Except that he did not suggest attempting artificially to regulate prices (indeed, he strongly deprecated any such idea), it is not unlike the scheme which was at last introduced into the Coal Trade under the Coal Mines Act of 1930 in an attempt to deal with the disastrous state of affairs which has existed there for the past decade.

The mistake that my father made, however, was in being thirty years ahead of his time. In 1896 there were, as Mr. David Evans has pointed out, "very few owners who were prepared or competent to consider the industry as a whole, or able to see that their own interest was bound up with such a view"—the vast majority could not see, and did not want to see, beyond the ends of their noses or the limits of their own individual little colliery undertakings. Naturally enough, they thoroughly disliked the whole idea of my father's scheme. It had in their eyes every disadvantage:

in the first place it was new; in the second it involved acting as a body in ways in which each had hitherto had complete individual freedom to commit suicide in his own way; in the third it involved acting in co-operation with the men, an innovation which the owners strongly resented, both as establishing a dangerous new precedent, and as being beneath their dignity. The scheme had, however, produced a marked effect on opinion in the South Wales Coalfield. The coalowners realised that it would take some killing. Led by Sir William Thomas Lewis (afterwards Lord Merthyr), the inner ring set themselves to effect the necessary slaughter, which was carried out neatly enough by means of putting forward as their own an almost identical scheme (which had my father's immediate and enthusiastic support) and then killing it on the ground that, although it had the support of over eighty per cent. of the coalowners, eighty per cent. was not sufficient to ensure success. Instead the owners proceeded to provoke a quarrel with the men, which ended in the disastrous strike of 1898.

The whole affair took some two years, during which my father thoroughly enjoyed himself. He wrote letters to the papers, made speeches, published interviews, giving his unvarnished opinions of the coalowners both as a body and individually. ("It was hardly necessary for Mr. Jones"—I quote from a good sample letter—"to say that 'his own opinion was very much in accord with that of Sir William Thomas Lewis.' It is well known that the Monmouthshire and South Wales Coalowners' Association is a one-man affair, and that Sir W. T. Lewis carries the Association, so to speak, in his waistcoat pocket; it was hardly necessary, therefore, for Mr. Jones to put his little beak—and Mr. Jones will not, I am sure, take offence where no offence is meant—for a moment over the edge of the pocket to chirp

'Here I am still quite in accord,' for nobody ever doubted it. . . .') He tried to ginger up the miners' leaders to the point of forcing the hand of the owners. "Mabon," he declared, "when he assumes the rôle of fighting leader, reminds me of the 'Duke of Plaza-Toro,' who

'In enterprise of martial kind,  
When there was any fighting,  
He led his regiment from behind :  
He found it less exciting.'

The strike ended in a temporary triumph for Sir William Thomas Lewis; nevertheless, within four years the coal-owners had had to concede most of the reforms which the miners had demanded, and my father supported, prior to and during the stoppage.

The Cambrian Collieries (the ones in which my father was concerned) worked almost all through the strike of 1898. Outputs were considerably increased and profits (large, though not so large as indignant coalowners averred) were made. By the end of it my father was the best hated man in the world amongst all the other coalowners in South Wales. Nor was he altogether loved by the miners' leaders; his gingering-up process had left many of them a little sore. His future chances of bringing any further order into the chaos of the South Wales Coalfield must have appeared nil. The man whose whole conscious gospel was the gospel of individualism had spent ten years working on a scheme whose benefit would be for the whole community in which he lived, and only for himself in so far as he was part of that community, and he had failed because he had once more been brought up against the short-sighted parochialism of the average person.

Between 1900 and 1907 he must, I think, on both sides of his work have gone through the bitterest, the most dis-

illusioned period of his whole life. One saw very little of it, however, at home. He was not a man who showed his wounds. My mother always used to say that the only way she could ever tell he was feeling depressed was that he whistled more aggressively than ever and was more obviously cheerful. He had a horror of crying over spilt milk.

At the time I was scarcely aware of what was happening. But when I look back I realise that many of the symptoms of the man who stares failure in the face were there: perhaps most significant of all, the untrammelled indulgence in scrapping for its own sake.

He failed in that attempt of his to tidy up the South Wales Coal Trade, largely, I think, because he was in his youth, and indeed all his life, an idealist. Not an idealist of the kind that expects people to act from motives of pure altruism. That he never was. "Let us admit," he would say, "that Providence had distilled into the heart of man a drop of selfishness." That was a thing he never forgot, always made allowance for in his dealings. But Providence has also distilled into the heart of man drops of snobbishness, of stupidity, of prejudice, of insincerity of thought and action—he was apt in his youth to ignore all these.

He expected a man to act in his own interest—yes. But he expected him also to be capable of knowing what that interest really was. He always found it difficult to understand that a man might not be able to see what was to his own *ultimate* advantage. Instinctively he took the long view himself, and he found it difficult to suppose that there were people who would snatch the present at the expense of the future; he did not overrate their altruism or their honesty, but he did overrate their intelligence. He did, unconsciously, expect to find a degree of intellectual sincerity

which is rare. An instance of the kind of thing I mean recurs to me. When we travelled in Southern Europe we used to find, in most of the big towns, agents of some colliery company or exporting firm in which my father was interested. These gentlemen were very *empresés* in looking after us, and were known in the family as "Father's Ambassadors." On one occasion in Southern Italy we were met by a newly appointed agent whom my mother and I with one voice acclaimed as a rogue of the first water. "Don't trust him, David," said my mother. My father's retort was typical. The man might be a rogue (though he disliked thinking such a thing of an employee without any definite reason), but the agreement between him and the firm was so drawn up that it paid him to be honest—therefore, of course, he would be honest. I do not doubt that it would have paid him—ultimately—but he was of the kidney that prefers pocketing £1 to-day by devious means to making £2 next week by straightforward ones, and he acted up to his instincts shortly afterwards. His point of view was one that my father was constitutionally unable to grasp.

And it was not merely that kind of rogue he could not understand; it was also the hidebound prejudiced person in authority who rejects a plan partly because it is new, partly because it is the idea of a young upstart whom he wishes to keep in his place. That one could reject a good idea for such reasons—indeed, that one could reject a good idea at all—was to my father one of the eternal mysteries. His instinct was to convince men intellectually and then to suppose that he had done the trick. It took him many years to learn that men are more easily moved by snobbery, for example, than by intellectual conviction. In his later years he learnt how to flatter, became indeed, when he chose, a past master in the art; and he learnt to know in his head that a good

argument was not enough, but he never to his dying day quite learnt to know it in his heart.

He was an idealist too in that he expected men to love efficiency, to hate chaos for its own sake. That they might prefer to make twopence and watch the man next door struggling to make a halfpenny, to making sixpence and watching him happily making fivepence, would have seemed to him silly—and cheap. And so he never quite allowed for it.


\* \* \* \* \*

When 1906 came he faced up to the fact that he had failed in politics. But in business—in a capitalist world—there was still a way. He took it. Hitherto he had slightly despised the man who merely made money. He had always held the view that the capacity to make money was no test of brains. (“My dear fellow, I look upon you,” he once in a moment of frankness remarked to a millionaire at the Cardiff Docks, “as a walking illustration of the fact that money can be made without brains.”) But the path which he would have chosen was apparently barred to him: if money-making was to be his test of success, then money-making it should be, and on a scale to make it worth while.

But it was not money-making alone. He must very soon have seen, if he did not see at the start, that the order he had planned to make out of the chaos of the South Wales Coalfield in the 'nineties could be achieved in this other way; not by persuading the pundits of the Coal Trade to adopt on their merits the arguments of a cock-sure young man, but by achieving such a hold on the South Wales Coalfield that he could no longer be ignored, that he could dictate his terms to the other coalowners—not by force of argument but by force of power. He set to work. Collieries, sales agencies and various other South Wales businesses tumbled one after

the other into his waistcoat pocket. The whole thing happened within a decade.

In 1906, when he rejoined the Board of the Cambrian Collieries Limited, he was director of this one private company. His only other tie of any importance with the Coal Trade was that he held a partnership in the firm of Thomas and Davey, Sales Agents for Cambrian. All that he owned in cash besides his seventh share in the Cambrian Collieries were some few shares in various colliery undertakings. For the rest, to quote Mr. David Evans, "He had acquired fame as an authority on coal questions, and, within the narrow circle in which he moved, considerable prestige as a public man of fearless independence." That was all.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LAST YEARS

By 1916 he was the man who both in fact and in name had the deciding voice in the future of eleven or twelve colliery undertakings with an aggregate output amounting to between one-fifth and one-quarter of the whole output (steam and anthracite) of South Wales, and in the various sales agencies responsible for marketing their coal. Not to mention a host of other minor interests. By 1916 he was pretty nearly in a position to dictate to the South Wales Coal Trade. But by 1916 the war was in full swing, and at last, in 1916, the State found use for his services.

It had begun to find use for them in 1915. A queer beginning. I give the story in the words the late Harold Begbie once quoted from Mr. Lloyd George :

“My fight with Rhondda had been bitter, very bitter; it had been a long fight too, extending over many years. I remember so well our meeting in the summer of 1915. It was in the streets of Cardiff. I went up to him, put out my hand, which he took immediately, and said to him, ‘Look here, Thomas, I want you to do some work for the Government. I want you to help the country.’ He answered at once, ‘I’ll do anything you ask me : what is it you want me to do?’ I replied, ‘I want you to go to America.’ His face fell : there was an expression on it of real pain. Remember, he had only just survived the *Lusitania* crime; remember too that it was that fearful experience which nearly killed him in the end. He replied to me, like the brave man he was, ‘Isn’t there anything else I could do? I don’t mind telling you that the thought of crossing the Atlantic frightens me. To be perfectly frank, I funk it badly. I can’t get the *Lusitania* out of my mind. I dream of it.’ I told him there was nothing more urgent then than the mission I asked him to accept. There, in



the streets of Cardiff, I told him how our magnificent soldiers were being slaughtered for the want of shells, and how we were not getting the help we wanted from the manufacturers of America, simply because of the confusion that existed out there.

"Well, he accepted. . . . He went to America. He organised a supply of munitions from the States and from Canada. He got the right men round him. He chose the right men, and he set things going. There were all sorts of quarrels and difficulties, but in every case he simply said, 'I know only one thing: our need of guns and shells.' And he inspired the whole heart of America with the flames of liberty. From that hour the supply never wavered or checked. It was Rhondda who gave to America and the Allies a breathing space and a chance. That service of his cannot be over-estimated."

I have sometimes wondered whether if his old enemy had begun by asking him to do anything which he found less disagreeable than prickly pride of his might not have made it difficult for him to accept. He must have felt in taking on this particular piece of work within six weeks of that nightmare *Lusitania* disaster as if he were conferring a favour rather than accepting one. The *Lusitania* had gone to the bottom on May 7th. On June 25th he once again sailed for America. My mother, mindful of the possible submarine dangers, insisted on accompanying him.

One curious little incident, very characteristic of those haphazard war days, sticks in my mind. He was given no credentials of any sort. He had nothing with him to show that he was the accredited agent of the British Government. The Ministry of Munitions, when asked, said that this was not necessary. Possibly they were simply in a hurry; possibly they feared to give him too much authority. Just before he started, however, Mr. Lloyd George made a speech in the House of Commons in which he said:

"I felt, in consequence of the great importance of the American and Canadian markets and of the innumerable offers which I

have received, directly and indirectly, to provide shell munitions of war from Canada and the United States of America, it was very desirable that I should have someone there who, without loss of time, which must necessarily take place when all your business is transacted by means of cable, should be able to represent the Munitions Department in the transaction of business there and find out exactly the position. I propose to send over, on behalf of the Munitions Department, a gentleman who was once a member of this House—a very able business man. He has business relations with America on a very considerable scale, and I propose to ask Mr. D. A. Thomas to go over to America for the purpose of assisting us in developing the American market. He will represent and exercise the functions of the Munitions Department, both in Canada and in the United States, and he will be given the fullest authority to discharge the responsible duties with which he is entrusted. Mr. Thomas will co-operate with the representatives of the Government, both in Canada and in the United States of America. . . . While invested with full powers, he will, no doubt, act in consultation with the authorities at home, except in cases of special urgency.”

My father, with a chuckle, bought twelve copies of the Hansard containing this speech, and armed with this, his only visible authority, set off on his mission.

He returned home towards the close of 1915, and received a peerage in the New Year's Honours List for 1916. We had long discussions as to what name he should take. I have always been glad that he finally chose Rhondda, which is, I think, a beautiful Welsh word. I liked also the motto he decided upon (choosing it partly because its initials, like his own, were D.A.T.): *Diligentia Absque Timore*. That was true of him, and it is good enough to be worth trying to follow.

There followed the pause of a year. Then in December 1916, when Mr. Lloyd George, with whom he was, of course, now on friendly terms, formed his Ministry, he was offered the post of President of the Local Government Board (now

the Ministry of Health). He was sixty and his chance had come at last.

The story of the offer has always amused me. On Saturday, December 9th, my father, who was at Llanwern (as always at the week-end), was summoned to the telephone to answer a trunk call from London. The man at the other end of the line was Mr. Lloyd George, who asked him if he would take office in his Ministry, as President of the Local Government Board. "Is it in the Cabinet?" asked my father. "There isn't going to be any Cabinet," was the reply (it reminded me of the small boy and the apple: "There ain't going to be no core"). My father accepted, though he remarked that he could not quite see why he was chosen for this particular office, of which he knew nothing. "I shall be a round peg in a square hole there," he said. "Oh no," was the reply; "I have specially selected you for that post because you will be able to . . ." At that point the telephone, which had been bad from the start, gave out altogether; the conversation closed, and my father never knew to the end of his life for what reason he was specially chosen as President of the Local Government Board.

The Department was not the one he would have chosen; he began his new work a little doubtful as to whether there was much of interest in it. And then, in a few months, he had grasped the possibility of a Ministry of Health—a Ministry that, as he saw it, could do more for the nation than any other. He was fascinated, enthralled. . . . He burrowed into the masses of statistics; the one that horrified him most was the infant mortality rate. During 1915 (the last year for which the figures were then available) 110 babies under one year of age had died for every 1,000 born. He discussed this figure with the experts. It was, they

said, something like double what it need be; about 50,000 babies died needlessly every year. (They were not far out. The 1930 figures, only fifteen years later, show 60 deaths for every 1,000 births, not much more than half the deaths of 1915.) The thing struck him with horror.

I have heard people express surprise that he should have been so much upset—it has never seemed to me surprising; it was entirely in keeping with every instinct he possessed. He had a horror of unnecessary waste; he was more conscious than most of the sacredness of life, to him a gift of inexpressible value (in later years he disliked even killing a wasp, though he was a little ashamed of admitting it). Death to him was a very terrible thing; a person who had died was always “poor So-and-so.” This was no conventional phrase; it expressed his genuine shocked pity that what was to him the one—perhaps the only—great misfortune should have befallen them. Moreover, he had the imagination which to some extent at least could visualise what those 50,000 deaths meant; all his life he had dealt in figures and statistics—they were live things to him. And he always built for the future: he had a special reverence for children because they represented the coming generation. It was the most natural thing in the world that his imagination should be seized by these figures.

How, then, were this and kindred health problems to be adequately dealt with? There was, as he saw it—and it was the kind of thing he saw very easily—only one really effective way: they must be dealt with, not by a number of competing and overlapping ministries, but by one co-ordinating authority alone, and it must be the first business of that authority to deal with them. The fifty-year-old Local Government Board must die, and in its place must be born the Ministry of Health. No sooner was he convinced

of this than he turned his whole attention to forcing this change upon the Cabinet. They must, he urged, do away with "the existing chaos in our health services." It was the same cry that twenty years earlier he had raised in the South Wales Coalfields, and he died believing that he had received the same response.

There must be, he wrote to the War Cabinet in an urgent memorandum, "the immediate establishment of one Central Ministry of Health, in place of two or three separate and competing Government Departments, which at present separately supervise various elements in the national health problem. . . . All that is wanted is a three-clause Bill establishing a Ministry of Health and Local Government to supersede the Local Government Board. . . . The Bill would be popular and would raise no party controversies. It would be essentially a war emergency measure for making possible the immediate development of the maternity and infant welfare and other services above described, for which public opinion is already clamouring. . . ." And a few weeks later :

Already my proposals for dealing with infant welfare have been quite unnecessarily blocked for over two months, and realising as I do the possibility of saving something like 1,000 lives a week, you can understand my feeling of responsibility in the matter . . . frankly I am greatly disappointed and also disheartened. . . . Until I receive Cabinet authority to proceed all my plans of Health Reform are held up, and if, as you appear to suggest, it may be the "end of this year" before I am able to publish my scheme, I should have to consider seriously my position.

The blocking was perhaps natural. The point of view held by the average not too sensitively imaginative man was well illustrated in the comment made to the late Harold Begbie by Mr. Lloyd George: "He . . . contracted quite a passion for the health of babies—rather an unexpected pas-

sion for Rhondda. I mean, he was a man of business who loved big adventures, loved success, loved playing his hand well, the stakes at his side only valuable in his eyes as a sign that he was winning. And here was a passion for babies! However, the call of duty was powerful enough to interrupt that passion."

"The call of duty" to which Mr. Lloyd George referred was the call to the Ministry of Food. My father himself had grave doubts as to which side his duty lay—and, though we tried not to admit it to ourselves at the time, another Call had come first.

\* \* \* \* \*

One Sunday in March 1917 (after my father had been for three months at the Local Government Board) he and I were out walking in one of the Monmouthshire lanes when, as we came to a slight hill, he complained of a curious pain at his heart, quite different from anything he had ever felt before. It came again up every hill. . . . The next week he went to Sir James Mackenzie, the great heart specialist, who told him he had a mild form of angina pectoris, but that there was no immediate danger. The words startled me, and without telling him I went off and saw Sir James myself to make sure that he had told him the whole truth. He was a very human person, and very honest. I suppose, correctly speaking, he had no right to tell me anything, but he did not hesitate, and he was kindness itself. He explained what was wrong. His final words I still remember: "Your father," he said, "can live to be ninety with that heart, if he goes slow and takes care . . . but he won't." He was right.

In May came Mr. Lloyd George's "call of duty": the offer of the Food Ministry. My father tried to refuse it.

He was entirely happy where he was; and he had no intention of relinquishing his office until he had forced the Cabinet to agree to a Ministry of Health. Obviously, moreover, it was little less than suicide to dream of accepting so onerous a post.

But the Food Ministry was a thankless task; it was regarded as the certain grave of a man's reputation; others were approached, but no one could be found to accept it. "The official lives of Food Controllers in other countries had," as Sir William Beveridge has remarked, "been generally unpopular and short." In a few weeks Mr. Lloyd George returned to the attack. I remember our walking up and down the lawn, my father, my mother and I, one hot summer night at Llanwern, discussing what he ought to do. My father put the pros and cons; or rather the cons, for, save for the thrill of a new adventure, there were few pros. It almost certainly meant the loss of his reputation, and if the doctors spoke truth it meant pretty certain death. My mother said very little. I was for his taking it. I was younger then, and death had never touched me closely; it did not seem a believable thing that it could claim my father. As for his reputation, I had boundless faith in him—I could as little imagine him failing as dying. I should, I suppose, say much the same now as I did then. But I should know what I was saying. However, though he might discuss it with us and with himself, I imagine that in fact his mind was already made up. He accepted, of course. At such a time no man, whatever the price, could well refuse.

Before he agreed to move, however, he exacted a promise in return for his acceptance that the Ministry of Health should be established by the autumn. He was much troubled later in the year because the promise was not kept. It was

never fulfilled until after his death. He died believing that the promise had been broken and that he had failed.

\* \* \* \* \*

He began his work at the Food Ministry on June 15th, 1917. At last at sixty-one he had a job which stretched his capacity to the full. It killed him in just over a year.

The work was, of course, very much harder than at the Local Government Board, since everything depended on immediate success. In one sense he certainly did not enjoy it as much as he had that of his other Department. On the other hand, it was infinitely more exciting. At the Local Government Board he had been planning for the future health of the nation. At the Ministry of Food it was a hand-to-mouth business; he had to prevent the risk of immediate starvation and loss of morale.

The scope of the Ministry was enormous. The total turnover of its trading business alone came to nine hundred millions a year. The real question at issue when my father came into office was how far control of supplies and prices should go. Half measures of control had been tried both in this country and in others, and they had failed. Was it possible to succeed with complete control? My father—it went against every economic principle he possessed—decided that it was. “I intend,” he declared, “to be as fair as conditions of war permit, but frankly my sympathies are with the consumers.” “It must not be imagined, however,” wrote Sir E. C. K. Gonner, one of his most trusted assistants at the Ministry, “that he welcomed the task of fixing and controlling prices. On the contrary he detested it . . . at his first interview (he) . . . expressed straight away his strong personal distaste, but added that abnormal conditions warranted abnormal methods. Of course, he



said, it is only feasible when accompanied with the absolute control of the supplies. This in most cases meant State purchase and ownership. But once having settled that prices must be fixed, he was determined that the method adopted should be thorough. Prices must be fixed at every stage and throughout was his decision. Half measures, as he often said, were useless . . . he discussed the general economic principles involved on any large matter awaiting decision because he liked to feel that in deviating from normal methods and principles he was warranted in his attitude by the abnormal conditions in which he was called on to act. But first and last he always faced facts."

In the nine months of his actual control of the Food Ministry he used the fruits of the thought and experience of a lifetime. His choice and treatment of the men under him, his power to delegate all but the essentials, his loyalty to, and confidence in, his Department—all these things came naturally to him. ("Officers whom he trusted," said Sir E. C. K. Gonner, "felt that they had his entire confidence. On one occasion detecting a shade of surprise on the face of one whom he had told to use his name as he thought fit, he said, 'You don't think I should go back on you?' It was explained that it was not apprehension but surprise at the fulness of his confidence. 'You can use my authority as you think necessary,' he said; adding, with a flash of humour, 'but do be careful and let me know exactly what you have said.'") But his careful blending of Civil Service and business experience, his establishment of a Costing Department, his policy of complete control, combined with the method of decentralisation—his insistence that the public should be kept fully informed, his infinite care of the press—both to inform it and to hear what it had to tell him—these were the outcome of long experience both in the

business and political world. "He had always a welcome for journalists," wrote the late Mr. Leonard Rees, editor of the *Sunday Times*, "whom he regarded as amongst his coadjutors, able to give information as well as to receive it. 'What are they saying?' he would often ask. 'I can't succeed if I don't carry public opinion with me. You've got your ear to the ground and can tell me.' He never took his finger for one moment off the pulse of public feeling."

One of his first decisions on coming to the Ministry was that the 4 lb. loaf should be sold for 9d. He made a public announcement to this effect within six weeks of accepting office, and by the third week in September the price of the 4 lb. loaf had been reduced to 9d. throughout almost the whole country. Bread was in his view the keystone of the morale of the population because it was on bread that the poorest classes depended. If bread was kept cheap and they could continue to obtain it they would feel that their food was safe and that they were being fairly treated. The decision caused a good deal of stir at the time. He had had very considerable difficulty in persuading the Cabinet to adopt his policy. It meant a big Government subsidy. There were a large number of technical difficulties in the way. And above all it entailed real risk, since if bread were kept artificially cheap and were not rationed (and as he saw it it was an essential part of keeping up the morale of the country that it should not be rationed), then there was nothing to stop people buying as much as they wanted and it became a grave question as to whether the supply of cereals would last out or no. My father was determined that this was, on balance, the lesser risk of the two and he forced his view through the Cabinet. But the decision caused both them and him grave anxiety.

That last winter of the war was an anxious one. My father had reorganised the Ministry both in London and throughout the country; he had, in essentials, controlled prices, and he had controlled supplies—but obviously that was not going to be enough. However well the Ministry might control, there was a shortage, and there was bound to be a shortage, of such things as meat, sugar, potatoes, bread, bacon, butter, tea. Of these, meat, sugar and bread were essential. During January and February 1918 as many as a million people were standing weekly in queues in the London area alone, patiently waiting hour after hour for food which was often enough all gone before their turn came. On January 21st, 1918, *The Times* reported: "The queues at Smithfield around those butchers who do a retail trade were very large. At 11 o'clock one queue consisted of about 4,000 people." And on January 25th: "Food queues were more numerous yesterday than they have been on any day this year. There were butter and margarine queues, meat queues, and—a new development—fish queues. . . . Some of the queues gathered before dawn, and at Balham at 8.30 in the morning thousands of people were standing in line to buy margarine." In February things were getting worse. On February 18th the report ran: "In all parts of London on Saturday long queues of people gathered to buy meat, butter and margarine . . . queues began to turn up at 2 o'clock in the morning, and at 5.30, when the shops opened [in London Central Market], no fewer than 2,000 people were waiting." The country was getting restive, the situation was getting dangerous.

My mother told me a long time afterwards that all through that last year she had felt that the fact that he had never before held party office and so had no political past was a big advantage to him when it was above everything

essential that he should be trusted by all sides. I think she was right.

Compulsory rationing had so far failed in every country where it had been tried. Nevertheless, my father had reluctantly come to the conclusion that it must be tried in Great Britain. He was anything but sure that it would succeed, but he had faith in the national sense of justice; he did feel—and believe in showing—trust in the people. And after all this way was the just way. But it took some time to organise the plan. All through December, January and February the Ministry worked at perfecting the details.

It was not only the country which was getting restive, Mr. Lloyd George was getting restive too. He was wondering—quite visibly wondering—whether he would not be wise to drop his Food Controller overboard as a failure.

No wonder my father at last seemed to grow up during that year, no wonder that that look of fear and anxiety that shows so plainly in his last photographs came into his face.

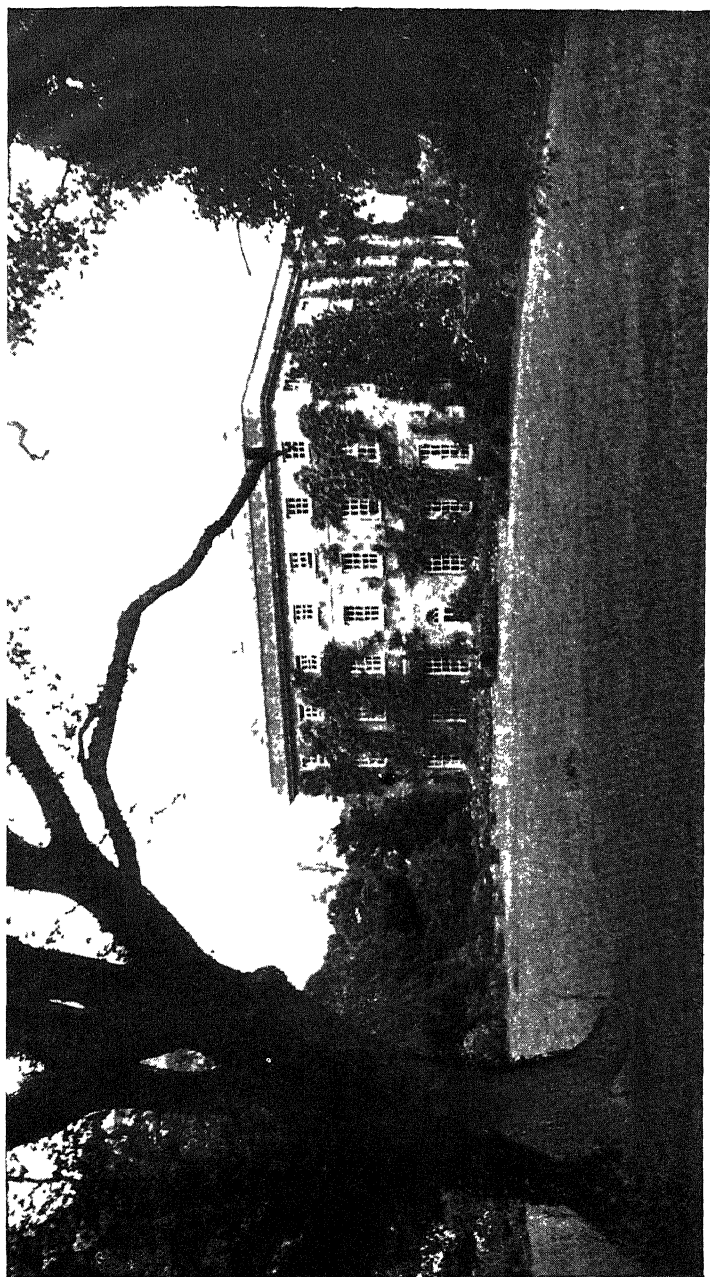
At last, on February 25th, 1918, the rationing plan was put into force; it had instant success. Within a week the queues had to all intents and purposes disappeared. They never returned.

My father's active life lasted for one month after that. His birthday—he was sixty-two—fell on March 26th. A few days later he went down to Llanwern for the Easter weekend. He never left it again.

All that last year—with a prodigality that I suppose was only half conscious—he had been dipping deeply into the capital of his reserve strength, since the income was no longer sufficient for the work that had to be done. He had been getting visibly more ill through the winter, but,

though strangers had known it, I do not think that we had realised it. Night after night he would wake and go on working. My mother, going into his room at five o'clock in the morning, would find him hard at it, and quite impervious to any suggestion of needing rest. One characteristic trait of his added probably more than we realised at the time to the strain he was bearing. All his life it had always been all or nothing with him. Fifteen cigars a day, or no tobacco at all. Twelve oranges at a sitting, or not an orange for months. "Nothing in moderation" might well have been his motto. Now it was his business to set the example in economising food. He refused to touch any of his ration of sugar. We never knew until it was too late that a man with a bad heart who was working at full pitch needed, according to medical theory, his quota of sugar. From Monday to Friday he ate no meat at all, and it was all anyone could do to get him to touch a small slice on Saturdays and Sundays. That was a winter when the shortage of food told on many people, but he was going shorter than many, he was working harder, and he was a man with a definite weakness.

The night he arrived at Llanwern his temperature was up, and he went off to bed with what appeared to be a slight chill. It got no better, but turned into an apparent lung attack. He lay through the weeks of April and May, sometimes in bed, sometimes allowed into the garden. May was his favourite month of all the year, and that spring was glorious. His armchair used to be put into the garden close by the big beech tree at the south corner. That May it was a wild tangled riot of azalea and forget-me-not. My mother will never allow her flowers to be pruned or tidied. She cherishes even the weeds, a trait we had often complained of in her, but it makes for lovely masses of May



LLANWERN.



flowers. He made no complaint that last year. He was loving every minute the colour, talking of it even more than ever before. He was seeing it all—and I suppose really he knew it—for the last time. “I must be quite the strongest man on earth by now,” he assured me one day. “Every time anyone sees me they tell me how much stronger I look than the last time they came!”

I was working at the Ministry of National Service just then, but I used to go down most week-ends. He got worse early in June, and thenceforward stayed in his bed. But it was late on in June before I knew that he was dying. There was so little to tell one. He seemed just like himself. His proffered resignation from the Food Ministry had been refused, and he himself was, as usual, buoying himself up. “I have made considerable progress during the last week, and my doctors tell me that within a few weeks I may hope to be as well and even better than when I first undertook the work of the Food Ministry,” he wrote to Mr. Lloyd George towards the end of May, in reply to the Prime Minister’s letter asking him to stop on as Food Controller.

Every day the official bag from the Food Ministry arrived, and he would go through all the papers it contained. Often he was so tired that he dropped asleep as he read. It was dreadful to see. I went to see his secretary at the Food Ministry towards the end of May, and made him promise that he would discontinue sending that bag. When it failed to arrive, however, my father was most indignant, and it had to be sent once more.

Sometimes the doctors would wire for me hurriedly in the middle of the week. One week they advised my staying down altogether, but that was difficult, for we did not want him to realise how ill he was, and that anyone, even his own daughter, should, during the war, give up their work to



be near him would, of course, have told him at once. So I had to go whispering about the house, and keep far from his room. Once I found myself whistling down his passage. It was too dangerous. I went back to London. Even then I do not think we realised that the end was really coming. The big gramophone that old Mr. Thomas Edison had given him over in America was placed near his room. Over and over again it played the tunes he loved best, and he, sitting up in bed, for his heart would not allow him to lie down, would move a long, thin finger to and fro as he listened. There are tunes that even to-day, I imagine, no one who was in the house that summer can easily hear.

We felt so powerless to help. Some of the farm bullocks used to be driven past under his window morning and evening and would low and trample loudly as they went by. This disturbed him, and I went to see the farm bailiff about it. The bailiff could not see how it would be possible to alter the farm routine. Suddenly it was a blessed relief to find something I could do. I said that every bullock on the farm should be slaughtered on that hour sooner than that my father should lose three minutes of the sleep he needed. The bailiff, who was really very fond of my father, and only too anxious to do all in his power to help so soon as it had penetrated his imagination that the sick man could really mind so small a thing, found, of course, another route for the bullocks.

On June 3rd, 1918, he was promoted to the rank of Viscount, with special remainder to me in case he had no son. That pleased him very much. It seemed to penetrate through the mist of indifference to the happenings of the outer world which already was beginning to envelop him. He had always wanted that remainder badly. Apart from that I do not think that anything from outside was interesting him

very much. The chorus of praise in the papers interested him scarcely at all—he who had loved praise so much. I could not bear to think that when it came at the end in such full measure it meant so little to him. Two things still counted—that Food Ministry bag and his Ministry of Health plans. I realise now that usually when a man comes near to death his own success ceases to interest him, whilst his plans for the world remain absorbing to the last. I did not realise that then. Infant mortality and medical research he discussed with his doctor, Sir Thomas Horder, with such vivid enjoyment, zeal and enthusiasm that Sir Thomas, who was staying in the house, came to the point of limiting his own visits to the sick-room, since the presence of someone who could talk with him of what he cared for most inevitably evoked a far greater output of vitality than the sick man could spare.

Sir Thomas Horder wrote shortly after his death some account of the last weeks: "Some souls are vital to the end, even when the last days are clouded by pain and weakness; his was one of these. This vitality was the feature that struck me most; so dominant, so forceful was it, even in that room into which the Shadow crept so slowly and yet so remorselessly. . . . With such a spirit life is not generally relinquished without a struggle, nor without regret, and though he might truly say that he had 'warmed both hands before the fire of life,' Lord Rhondda never assumed the sentiment necessary to declare 'it sinks, and I am ready to depart.' Life was a good thing: *there was still so much to do*. . . . 'Still so much to do.' The best thing of all yet to do. And in the quiet intervals between the bouts of breathlessness, during a week in which the patient's native optimism revived with the feelings of increased physical vigour due to the careful husbanding of his strength and to

the remedies employed, Lord Rhondda discussed the Ministry of Health—even then too long in embryo—and his purposes in regard to it. He sketched his plans and talked confidentially of the men he had already chosen in his mind to aid him in the work that was to crown his busy life, if he were spared to launch his scheme. Compared with this achievement his organisation of the Food Control, magnificent in the eyes of the world, seemed to him rather a little thing. He was almost ashamed of the enormous reputation it had brought him, and he valued the kudos chiefly as a powerful lever that might be used in order to lift his new Ministry into the confidence of the nation and give it a send-off that would ensure success. This fresh endeavour was the thing that lay nearest to his heart. It was a constant source of conversation with his doctors, whose presence tempted him to more talking than could be allowed in his weakness.”

At last one Friday when I went down the doctors were clear that even at the risk of his realising what it meant I must stay on. I went to him and told him that I had decided to take my holiday early that summer. And he replied that he had been meaning to ask me to stay down. That was only a few days before the end. On the Tuesday evening when we went to his room to say good-night, at last we all knew. He died—unconscious—early on the Wednesday morning, July 3rd, 1918.

By an odd freak of fate the man who had all his life been an ardent individualist had failed in his youth because he came up against the extreme of the individualist point of view, and had made the last big success of his age by deliberately breaking every theory he possessed.

## CHAPTER XV

### A WOMAN IN BUSINESS

My father came home one evening not long after my marriage and declared that what he needed was someone whom he could trust absolutely in big as well as little ways. Not a secretary : that he had already, but something between a highly confidential secretary and a right-hand man, who should have the status of a business associate. He discussed the matter at some length.

The difficulty as he saw it was that it was a grave risk to take on suddenly, without years of testing, someone whom he would be trusting with his closest secrets, someone who would be put into such a position that, if he were not loyal and trustworthy down to the last hair, he could do immeasurable harm. Yet for the post he had in mind that was what he needed. He held strongly to the view that one should not expect anyone to be completely trustworthy. Given sufficient temptation the breaking-place came, he believed, in every person at some point. (Once when he was engaging a new secretary and heard what salary he had been getting previously, he asked the man whether he found that he and his family could live comfortably on that. The man replied, No. That he was in continual difficulties and was at the moment living beyond his income. "What," inquired my father, "could you live on without anxiety?" The secretary told him, and my father gave it him. He came home and told us about it—with the comment that he had done it because it was never safe to have anyone about one in a confidential capacity who was living beyond his

income. The strain of the temptation, he said, would be too great to be safe.)

The right-hand man he wanted would, if he were to fulfil the functions which he envisaged for him, need to have a complete knowledge of his inmost affairs and access to many of his confidential papers. Yet the man's interests could not on the face of it be in every particular completely identical with his own. He thought of offering £1,000 a year—that was more money in those days than it is now, of course. Could he be sure of getting for that, or indeed for any salary in the world, a man of first-class intelligence on whom he could rely as his *alter ego* always to put his employer's interests first? He puzzled over the problem on that evening and on many subsequent ones. He had the names of various people in mind, but he could not quite make up his mind to the plunge. At last my mother said, "Why not try Margaret?"

Both he and I were a little startled at the idea. Obviously I was not exactly what he had wanted. In the first place, I lacked experience; in the second, to take a daughter down to the docks would be a most unheard-of innovation. There would be much talk and no doubt a good deal of laughter. Moreover, the very fact of my being a woman would often make it impossible to use me where he could have used the man he had in mind. He had the belief and pride in his daughter that is common to fathers the world over—and he had it perhaps even more markedly than many. But he enjoyed being laughed at as little as most men. On the other hand, I had one obvious advantage. My interests would be identical with his own: I was the one person in the world of whom that could be true; however confidential the matter, he could trust me completely in every possible way. There would be no gnawing doubt on that score.

I for my part was no more sure of the idea than he was. I had only recently married, and housekeeping still loomed large on my horizon—how could I combine business with housekeeping? My husband and I kept three maids. I was in the habit of visiting the cook every morning, discussing the day's meals with her and putting out stores—how was this ritual to be combined with catching the 9.5 to Cardiff?

There was also the question of suffrage. I spent most of the time that I did not employ about the house in working for the militants—would I have any time left for that at all? Prid, however, who was staying at Llanwern at the time, pointed out that I could do more for suffrage, or at least for feminism, by taking the chance of going into business than by working for the militants for ten years. And I knew that what she said was true. Also there would be the evenings and Saturday afternoons. Quite a lot could be done then. No; I need not trouble my head about suffrage. But the housekeeping difficulty remained.

On the other hand, a thousand a year was a lot of money; it would rather more than double our income. That was attractive. And in various other ways I was much taken by the idea. In the end my father made up his mind before I did, and offered me the job. I swithered for a few days more. I discussed it with my husband—he saw no objection. I considered the housekeeping question afresh. I had a perfectly competent cook. Might it not be possible to put out stores and discuss the meals, etc., once for the whole week, instead of seven times? I went to my father. "If," said I, "I may work only five days a week and have Saturday mornings off for housekeeping I'll do it." The bargain was concluded on that basis.

In those days women were almost unknown at the Cardiff

Docks. In the Cambrian Buildings where my father had his office the only women in the whole place were two telephone girls tucked away on the top storey. To get to the only women's toilet and lavatory one had to go through these telephone girls' room on the fifth floor. The room in which I worked was next to my father's on the first floor. It was not a convenient arrangement.

I do not know whether my appearance at the docks really caused as much amusement as I suspect that my father had feared. If it did, I heard nothing of it. But then I probably should not. One old gentleman certainly did go to my father to warn him. He had, he told him, considered bringing his own daughter into his business, but he had realised that it would never do. A woman alone in this world of men . . . it was unsuitable. Moreover, she would be completely at the mercy of any man who, left alone with her, used his opportunity to take an undue advantage of her isolated position. My father chuckled. "I'd be very sorry for the man who tried," he said.

From the first my father made a point of letting me be present at all his interviews and conferences. It was extraordinarily educational. I remember that it gave me a curious shock of surprise, after seeing him treated without any ceremony at all at home (sometimes as if he were a beloved and charming, but rather spoilt, school-boy), to go for the first time into the Cardiff office and hear his very name uttered with awe, not only by his own staff, but by all with whom he came into contact. Another thing that interested me was the tremendous capacity for concentration shown not only by my father, but by the best of the men he worked with. When any important deal was being discussed the intensity of concentration of all those minds upon it was like some curious live force in the room. I have

ceased to notice it long years ago, but it was natural enough that it should strike a young woman fresh out of the world of the home and the drawing-room, where interminable and somewhat irrelevant conversation, about things that did not matter to anyone and got no one any further, would go on sometimes for hours between five or six people at a time; and real concentration, since it was never really needed, was a thing almost unknown.

There was a regular routine in the office which varied very little. When my father arrived he began by attending to his letters, usually dictating them himself. After he had finished these—and he had a way (most trying to his secretary) of answering all sorts of queer letters from unimportant people at great length, if they happened to interest him—his time was taken up in seeing people: colliery managers, general managers, company secretaries, sales agents, men who wanted to do a deal with him, brokers, solicitors, coal exporters, Labour men, political friends, press men, old colliers from the hills, business associates. There was usually a group waiting outside in the secretary's room, all anxious to catch him next. If he liked a man he was apt to get interested in his talk with him and keep him chatting there for three-quarters of an hour or more, to the furious impatience of the men next on the list, convinced that their affairs were of infinitely greater importance, and that D. A. himself really thought so. I don't doubt that he had given each of them that impression—he had the Welsh knack, which in these matters is very like the Irish, and was usually on the best and most intimate terms with everyone who frequented his office.

He had a theory, which no doubt accounted for the length of some of the interviews, that if you saw a person at all you should let him talk himself out, and not allow him to go



with a feeling that he had been dismissed before he had said all he had to say. He declared that it doubled the value of the interview, and you might as well do it thoroughly if you were going to do it at all. One used to wonder sometimes how he had the patience.

There were certain people closely associated with him whom he made a point of seeing once or twice a week, if not oftener. Amongst these were several press men. He was always in close touch with the press, and his methods were very successful. "I shouldn't wonder if that were to leak out," he would say with a twinkle in his eye, when there was something which he wanted to get into the papers—and leak out it invariably did.

He had certain rules. He never kept a man waiting without a reason; it was a form of bluff or swank which he disliked. He never stood on his dignity as to whether he should go to the other man or the other man come to him. If there was any difficulty about it, he went to the other. This was done on principle, and one of the first pieces of advice which he gave me when I went into business was that I should always do likewise.

A considerable part of his time used to be spent in investigating new patents, which always interested him. He often took them up. Patent fuel processes, improved coal washeries, new methods of mending motor tyres, patent processes of making paint or roof tiles, new methods of using clay, coal by-product schemes of all sorts . . . these are just a few which recur to me. Very few attained any great measure of success, but he never supposed that many would. He spent, however, a great deal of money upon them, they were his luxury, and he looked on them as a peculiarly attractive form of gamble. He would declare that if one in six of these experiments succeeded it would be a high

average. I doubt if in actual fact the average was anywhere near that. For years the flat roof of the Cambrian offices was covered with a number of wire-netting cages in which patent fuel made according to a new process was weathering. We would go up once a fortnight or so to have a look at it and see how it stood the test.

Very soon my father began to use me to take down or, more often, to draft for him on agreed lines specially confidential letters or memoranda; to take confidential messages; to keep and to go through the papers relating to special businesses, or to go through piles of papers which were in some way private. Once I remember he asked me to sort out the contents of his coat-tail pockets, which always bulged like saddle-bags. In them was the accumulation of months. Everything possible was there from important papers and highly confidential letters down to prescriptions for pills.

To draft a business letter for him to sign was sheer pain and grief: often every other word would be altered before it would be allowed to pass. This was a pain shared by many, for my father was no respecter of persons and corrected with equal vigour every letter that went out under his name, however qualified the draftsman might be. There was one young man, a friend of his, whose business it was at one time, during the war years, to draft his letters, who could, and occasionally did, retort to him when corrected: "Well, considering I took a First in English and you only took a Second in Mathematics, I *ought* to know best." My father chuckled, but continued his corrections unmoved. One got to know certain errors which must always be avoided. No letter, for instance, ever left his office containing such a phrase as "as regards" or "with regard to" in it—they were his pet aversions—nor was one ever allowed

(even in ordinary speech) to use the word "mutual" in a wrong sense. But there were hundreds of other pitfalls. I used to persuade him to let me sign the letters I wrote for him myself and just let him know the gist of them, though I am inclined to think I avoided explaining my reason.

After a while certain sections of his interests were turned over to me to look after, to be responsible for, and to report upon to him when, and in so far as, I considered it necessary. I became, for example, responsible in this way for all his newspapers. As a politician he was too keenly interested in public opinion not to have an unusually live appreciation of the importance of the press. He aimed at getting some control of public opinion in South Wales through the medium of various local papers. From time to time, when opportunity arose, he bought one of these, so that at the time I took them over there must have been five or six of them—mostly small local papers published in various parts of Wales, usually printed in English, but one or two in Welsh. The press and everything that has to do with it has always fascinated me, and I thoroughly enjoyed being responsible for this particular interest.

When he went to America he gave me, temporarily, his Power of Attorney with complete control. Several of his business associates had considerable doubts as to the wisdom of this the first time he did it. But I cannot remember experiencing any serious trepidation, and if he himself felt any he was wise enough not to show it. Complete control with him meant complete control; once he was away one heard, beyond an occasional letter, very little of him. Of course I wrote regularly, but the replies were scanty and contained very little that was definite. Indeed, I appear to have kept one only, and in it I can find but one piece of definite advice: "You are quite right to refuse to guarantee an over-

draft for X——. I make a standing rule not to guarantee any account in which I am not personally and largely interested, and I want you to hold fast to this rule under all circumstances. I quite appreciate your difficulty in saying 'No.' That is one of my particular weaknesses also. The best way is to make up your mind beforehand definitely. I cannot understand Mr. —— advising you to guarantee X——. He ought to have known my strong objection to giving guarantees. Please tell him I am surprised that he should have so advised you. Another time when you have a difficulty in saying 'No' just put it on to me, and say you are acting under my very definite instructions."

Looking back, it seems to me odd that I so lightheartedly accepted such grave responsibilities. I think that I knew him so well that I had a pretty fair idea of what he would wish, and, of course, I knew that whatever mistakes I might make he would never let me down or go back on me, or even say very much about it. But I certainly minded enormously, almost painfully, what he thought of me, and whether he approved of what I did or no. Yet I can remember no serious anxieties, no lying awake at night, when I was left in control. Rather to the contrary. On one occasion when he was in America and I at home was responsible for suggesting and putting through a property deal involving over a hundred thousand pounds, I remember cabling to him quite cheerfully, "Free hand imperative," and immediately receiving—that was characteristic of him—the free hand I asked for. He did not know of the completion of the deal till he landed at Liverpool. And I can only once remember in all my business life demanding his presence when he was busy with other things and I was responsible for putting through some business for him. That was really because in that instance I was a little afraid that without his

backing I should not get my own way. Oddly enough, it is in all my life one of the few things I regret. He came, of course—it was a Saturday morning down in Cardiff: he was in the Ministry at the time and away in London except at week-ends—but he was very tired, and I knew he did not really think it necessary, and that he found it an effort to come. To this day it makes me wince to think that I made him do it.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

It would be rather stupid to pretend that, in business, being a woman makes no difference or constitutes no drawback. Of all the professions in the world to-day which have been newly opened to women there is none of which that can be truly said. In a world to which the arrival of women is a new phenomenon of course it makes a difference and of course it is a drawback. How could it be otherwise? All that can be said is that in the higher ranks of business—if one has the luck to get there—it is less of a drawback than it is in the rank and file of the profession. And that for this reason, that there the biggest cause of trouble of all—jealousy—is still absent.

That jealousy of women should tend to exist may be regrettable—it is certainly not surprising. Indeed, it is almost inevitable that the trade-union spirit should make men jealous of any new competing force in a country where, with each year that passes, the difficulty of finding a not overcrowded profession and of making an adequate living grows greater and greater. The attitude of resentment is no different when the competition comes from women from what it would be if the threat were that of an influx of Chinese or Russian or American labour. Both in the labour market and in the professional market the foreign competitor is

kept out. The Englishman can still defend himself against the Frenchman who wants to come into this country and practise his profession. He can no longer in most professions openly defend himself against the Englishwoman—although he can still do so in the more frankly selfishly organised trade unions—he would be superhuman if he were not angrily suspicious of this new threat to his chance of making a successful livelihood, and if he did not show that suspicion in exactly the same ways that such suspicion has been shown all the world over since the beginning of time. It would be most unreasonable to blame him for so entirely natural a reaction.

Moreover, by the infiltration of women it is more than his individual chance of making the most money possible out of his work that seems to be threatened; it is also sometimes the actual standing of his profession. When a being of a class which throughout the ages has been considered to be in certain specified directions inferior—inferior in courage, inferior in initiative, inferior in capacity for impersonal intelligence, unfitted for the spectacular successes—has been regarded, in fact, as belonging to the permanent serfdom of the race—gets into a hitherto barred profession, wins the Newdigate Prize, or flies to Australia, it lowers the whole prestige attached to entering that particular profession, to winning the prize or making the flight in question. It detracts, in fact, from the value of achievement.

When a woman makes a success in his chosen field, more especially when three or four women do, the young male thinks disgustedly that the thing he set out to do cannot be so difficult as he supposed. He begins to wonder whether it is really worth doing any more. The glamour wanes. The whole standard of values is lowered. A large number of women in a profession, at a college, at a university, lower

the prestige of that profession, college, university; it becomes a place fit only for women. So arises a strong jealousy for the prestige and honour of one's profession against this influx of an inferior group. There is often a conspiracy to prove that, when a woman did it, the achievement, whatever it chanced to be, was not really properly accomplished, or, if accomplished, that it was a mere fluke, not to be repeated. All this is not deliberately and consciously done, of course: it is almost entirely subconscious, but that makes it none the easier to combat.

The thing is, as I have said, most natural and inevitable and cannot reasonably be resented; but it does make the path of the professional woman infinitely harder than it would otherwise be. Unfortunately it is as common to humanity to be righteously indignant because other people are jealous of one as it is to be jealous, and, since women are as liable to all-too-human reactions as men, this jealousy does often lead to strong irritation on the part of those who suffer from its effects.

But in the upper ranks of most professions there is as yet little jealousy because there is as yet little cause. And this is particularly true of the business world. One swallow does not make a summer. The very occasional woman who gets the chance to stray into the upper ranks of the business world is as yet so rare a phenomenon, so little of a visible portent, that she frightens nobody. In any event, even when the influx begins to increase, there is always far less of this particular form of jealousy in the upper ranks of a profession than in the lower. The men at the top know well enough that they got there, not because of their sex, but because of their outstanding individual capacity. They may be—often are—jealous of other individuals, but they are not

afraid of any competing group as such. That is a great advantage, for the subconscious trade-union spirit of jealousy, never sleeping, yet never owning up to its real motive, is a tiring, a deadly thing to fight.

In business, of course, one meets, as a woman, other difficulties. And the fact that one is still a rare bird, while it saves one from jealousy, accentuates the other difficulties. Men are apt to be conscious that one is a woman—something different—when they should be only conscious that one is a person. That is a nuisance. They are apt to trust one's judgment and discretion rather less than they otherwise would. So long as one agrees with them, they applaud one's wisdom. But when by chance one disagrees—most of all when, as must occasionally happen, one is in a minority—one sees written on the face of every man in the room the consciousness that this person who dissents from the majority is after all only a woman. And the fight to get one's way is then twice as hard and twice as long as if one were a man. But I perhaps suffered less from this than would many. My father was himself tremendously trusted, and he had trusted me. Something of his mantle clung to me. I was a woman, true, but I was "D. A.'s" daughter. Men who had known him found it difficult to suppose that, even though a woman, "D. A.'s" daughter could be a complete fool.

One difficulty I have found which I think all women in higher positions in business and the professions still find. One is very largely cut off from the source of supply of gossip. The barrier that still exists between the sexes, the fact, for example, that if you are at Cardiff Docks you cannot go upon 'Change or lunch at the men's club, but have to depend on hearsay evidence for what happens on 'Change



and at lunch—even a little thing like that makes an enormous difference. Though one is in the life, one is not, one cannot yet be, altogether of it. No person who has never been cut off from the gossip of their profession, who has never stood outside the main stream of supply of talk, can realise how immensely important that talk is. Half the action that is taken depends for its success on a thorough knowledge of intelligent professional gossip. I imagine that as the years go on this difficulty will grow less and less. But it is still very much there to-day. As one gets more and more into the saddle and comes to be regarded more and more as oneself and less as the representative of a new and different class—someone outside the group—the difficulty gets less. But it remains there a little all the same. Women in big positions in other trades and professions have told me that they experience exactly the same difficulty.

Another drawback which I certainly have experienced, and which is, I imagine, still to some extent common to all women, is lack of equipment, lack of training and of education for the rôle one has to play. That is truer of some women and of some professions than of others, of course. And it is truer of my generation than of the generation that succeeds us. But it is, I think, still to a considerable extent true even of the youngest, though they may not yet realise it.

By lack of education I do not mean education in the ordinary sense of the word. So far as school-book learning went my own education (a public school up to the age of eighteen and a half, followed by a short time at a University) was in fact fully as good as, perhaps better than, that of the majority of the men with whom I had to make business contact. I mean something more subtle than that and not altogether easy to define.

During the formative period of childhood and adolescence

and as a young woman one was treated quite differently, in a thousand different ways, from the way in which a boy would have been. One was more protected, less was expected of one in very many directions (although more, of course, in others). A girl in innumerable subtle indirect ways is taught to mistrust herself. Ambition is held up to her as a vice—to a boy it is held up as a virtue. She is taught docility, modesty and diffidence. Docility and diffidence are of uncommonly little use in the business or professional world. A girl, after all, is all the while being prepared for her own special profession; and the profession of a wife or of a daughter at home is best and most successfully carried out by those who are prepared to defer to the judgment of others before their own. But the profession of business is not. Once deprive people of self-confidence and you can rule them pretty easily, as Mr. Wyndham Lewis recently remarked. That is a necessary part, then, of the upbringing of women who are intended to be ruled. "Make a person feel small . . . and he is in your power. . . . If you wish to get the better of a man, . . . in whatever matters you may be competing with him, get him feeling 'inferior,' and you cannot fail to overcome him." To make a person feel small is therefore (or certainly was) a recipe which can scarcely be bettered for the dishing up of a successful wife, but entirely fatal to the preparation of a successful business man.

I can remember when I first married grumbling at something that I thought ought to be done and was not being done with respect to my marriage settlement. "The trustees will know best," said my mother-in-law. She said it with such an air of certainty that for a moment I was over-awed. But a second's reflection took away the awe. "Trustees!" said I, with some scorn. "But really it's only So-and-so and So-and-so!" Every woman of my generation was brought

up from her babyhood to believe in her very bones that in every department outside the home, and even in the really important things inside the home, "the trustees knew best." She must submit to Authority. If later she stepped outside the home there remained the struggle between that early training in diffidence and the later acquired knowledge and confidence. It never quite ceased.

The inculcation of self-distrust is a serious drawback, but it is not the only one. That lack of confidence is founded, partly at least, on a real lack of experience. The boy is educated all along with a view to having to take up responsibility. The girl is not. He learns a thousand things (not in class, but outside it) that no one bothers to teach her and that she never bothers to learn. Again and again even to this day I feel the lack of those things that a small boy would have learnt in his private school days, but that I have had painfully and gradually to acquire in after life. I am sure that what is true of me is true of most of the women of my generation. When my lack of knowledge shows, it is immediately put down, of course, not, as it ought to be, to the fact of defects in my education due to my having been brought up after the approved pattern for a girl and having turned later to doing what has hitherto been regarded as a man's work, but to some inherent inability of the whole female sex, a kind of secondary sex attribute of stupidity and incapacity. It is inconvenient that it should show, for lack of knowledge of some unessential will often lead people not to trust one in an essential—so that I have long ago learnt to bluff to cover it. But I ought not to have to bluff. It is an inconvenience—a waste of energy—a drawback which I trust the generation now in its cradle may lack.

There is another handicap from which one suffers. As a child less was expected of one. One had always during

those dreadfully formative years the sense that if one failed at anything it did not really matter. One would not *have* to make good, to prove oneself against others, to pit one's wit and one's whole resources against the open world. One was sheltered, protected. Being a girl was an excuse in the eyes of those around one for a thousand things. If one climbed a tree and failed to reach the top. . . . If one had—as I chanced to have—an almost uncontrollable fear of plunging under water, so that I was over forty before I found courage to learn to dive (would it have remained quite so uncontrollable quite so long if one had been as publicly put to shame by it as a boy would have been?). If one funk'd one's fences out hunting. . . . Well, one was a girl. The best was not expected of one. If it came it was applauded. If it did not come allowances were made . . . one was a girl. That was a thing that got right down into one's bones. It affected me, perhaps, more than it might many. I was naturally lazy, naturally labour-saving, and in some things naturally cowardly. I gave what was expected of me; I did not tend to give more.

If one had been born a boy, yet with exactly the same mental and temperamental equipment, there is a sense in which one's early training and a thousand indescribable influences of early childhood and adolescence and early grown-up years would have turned one into a more capable person. On the other hand, the women of my generation, by the very force of the conflict which drove them out, by the very force of their handicap, gain something which the ordinary person, man or woman, does not—as against one's handicap one got something back. I am glad that I was born when I was. And—having been born when I was—I am glad that I was born a woman.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

It so happened that I personally missed a good many of the most devastating effects of a girl's training. My father always insisted that for me as for him ambition was a virtue and not a vice, and his habit of arguing with me on equal terms when I was only twelve or thirteen years old did much, as I have said, to prevent my acquiring any innate lack of self-confidence. I owe much, incalculably much, to that belief in me and that habit of arguing on equal terms. I owe a great deal too to my mother's sturdy independence of attitude and to that tough Haig family tradition that expected a woman to be as physically enduring as a man; that despised its small girls just as much as its small boys if they flinched at a twenty-mile walk. Haigs are stoical and sensible mothers. My mother might fuss over my colds like a hen with one duckling, insist on my staying in bed with even my very fingers covered up, and on my travelling first class, when all my cousins were travelling third, for weeks afterwards to avoid draughts—that was a natural thing for her generation to do. But when the specialist to whom she took me told her that climbing trees was bad for colds (I believe I owe a certain mistrust of doctors that endures to this day to that tactless suggestion), she paid not one minute's attention to him. And the idea of registering or even feeling anxiety never so much as occurred to her when, in order to test the relative strength of the smaller branches of oak, elm, beech and lime under strain, I climbed in turn half the trees in the park. And when, at the age of ten or thereabouts, I commandeered her new cream-coloured bicycle and went off on it for a ten-mile trek to try and learn how to ride, her indignation and anxiety, or at least so much of it as was expressed, was entirely on behalf of the risks run by the bicycle.


And I owe much to my St. Leonards training and, above

all, to Miss Sandys. At St. Leonards we were taught that what we undertook we had to perform: being a girl was no excuse for failure. Miss Sandys carried forward my home training. One was expected to be independent, to behave like a free and equal and responsible person. "If not, why not?" was Miss Sandys' attitude. Without the luck I chanced to have in my upbringing, I doubt if I could have found the courage, even though I was given the opportunity, to turn from an idle, protected girl into a business woman.

That lack of the courage and self-confidence that was never bred into us in our youth gets reinforced later on again and again by the look of disbelief in the faces of the men around one. . . . One was never taught to trust oneself, and by the same token they were never taught to trust a woman. . . . It is true that this latter drawback gradually diminishes and even almost vanishes as one makes a name. Men in my day were not taught to believe in women as a whole, but they were taught (as they had been taught since the dawn of history) to believe in the Exceptional Woman. It is most convenient to be regarded as an Exceptional Woman. Once one comes to be reputed as that, men's trust is much more to be depended upon—indeed, there is almost a touch of the old belief in magic and witches in the reverence they accord one. The only thing is that every now and again, if one chances to disagree with them, one sees a shade of doubt as to whether after all one can really belong to the true Exceptional Woman Species pass across their faces.

Personally, I have always believed that the Exceptional Woman is a pure myth. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that she is the creation of those who believe in her. She is no more born an exceptional woman than a queen bee is born a queen bee, but of course by the time she is

forty the woman who has lived a life unusual for a woman differs, and differs by that time fundamentally and ineradicably, from the woman who has lived the life which is still expected of the ordinary woman. And, theoretically, I am delighted to notice that as more and more women enter the professions the Exceptional Woman belief is beginning to die—killed by the force of numbers. Practically, however, to be regarded as an Exceptional Woman has great advantages, and I doubt if any woman who has up to now made good has hesitated to make use of the advantages thus thrust upon her. I certainly have not. After all, if one is a woman to-day one still needs to use every weapon that is presented to one.



PART IV  
THE WAR—AND AFTER





## CHAPTER XVI

MAY 7TH, 1915

IN March 1915 my father and I went across to America on a business trip. My father arrived before I did; I was detained at home, and followed him a week or two later. I went out on a little ship which took ten long dull days to do the journey. We were darkened to blackness every night for fear of submarines. Not so much as the lighting of a cigar was permitted on the decks after dusk. I remember that I took much too much of some anti-seasick remedy and was dazed with heavy sleep in consequence—but not too sleepy to be sick as usual when the bad storms came.

We reached New York early one bright April morning. On the quay my father was waiting for me. I could see him half an hour or more before our ship docked. I can see him standing there still.

I cannot remember any other holiday in my life that I enjoyed quite so much as I did that one. Partly, I suppose, it was being alone, off by myself with my father, with all that that implied of freedom, interest, stimulation and entirely satisfactory companionship—but it was not only that. In 1915, to come out into sunlit April New York, care-free and happy, after being under the heavy cloud of war at home, was an unspeakable relief. One should perhaps have been incapable of experiencing it. It may be that a more sensitive person could not have enjoyed even that temporary relief—but I know that I could and did.

Business came into our holiday, of course. Questions of Pennsylvania coal-mines—the plans for a new barge service

on the Mississippi—and various Canadian ventures of my father's—some prospective, others already undertaken—plans for railways across Northern Canada—for boat services on the Great Peace River in Northern Alberta—maps showing where minerals lay—where untapped reservoirs of oil were suspected. There were long discussions with various business associates on these and kindred matters—sometimes downtown, sometimes in our room at the Waldorf-Astoria. But these things were only enough to add zest to the holiday, never enough to count as hard work.

In the evenings—almost every evening—we went out, either to the theatre or to dinner parties. With money supplied by my father, I bought a lot of frocks in which I fancied myself very much, particularly in one black velvet evening one—but they all went down in the *Lusitania*. Perhaps that New York holiday stands out so shiningly in my memory for two other reasons. For one thing, for the first time in my life, when we went out together I sometimes felt myself to be almost a social success. At home my overpowering shyness had made me unavoidably a liability at any social function. In New York—going as I did under my father's wing—it was on more than one occasion clear that I was actually regarded as an asset. Those weeks of open-hearted American hospitality and forthcomingness, of frankly expressed pleasure in meeting one, did something for me that made a difference to the whole of the rest of my life. I dropped the worst of my shyness overboard on that holiday—it has never been so absolutely annihilating since. I have always been grateful to New York for that. And, finally, it was one of the last times when I consciously felt quite young. The war formed for most of my generation the bridge that separated us from our youth. And for many of us it cut off those last rays of morning sun

earlier than need normally have happened. The *Lusitania* disaster was the apex of my bridge.

Since my father could never bear to be away from Llan-wern during the two most perfect weeks of the year, the second and third weeks of May, we decided to return by the *Lusitania*, which sailed on May 1st. In New York, during the weeks preceding the last voyage of the *Lusitania*, there was much gossip of submarines. It was freely stated and generally believed that a special effort was to be made to sink the great Cunarder so as to inspire the world with terror. She was at that time the largest passenger boat afloat. The few pre-war passenger boats of greater tonnage had been commandeered for war service of various kinds.

On Saturday, May 1st (the day on which the *Lusitania* was to sail), in order that there might be no mistake as to German intentions, the German Embassy at Washington issued a warning to passengers couched in general terms, which was printed in the New York morning papers directly under the notice of the sailing of the *Lusitania*. The first-class passengers, who were not due on board till about ten o'clock, had still time after reading the warning, unmistakable in form and position, to cancel their passage if they chose. For the third-class passengers it came too late. As a matter of fact, I believe that no British and scarcely any American passengers acted on the warning, but we were most of us very fully conscious of the risk we were running. A number of people wrote farewell letters to their home folk and posted them in New York to follow on another vessel.

There were some two thousand people aboard altogether, counting passengers and crew. Curiously enough, there were a large number of children on the passenger list. We noticed this with much surprise. I think that the explana-

tion lay in the fact that a number of the families of Canadians serving in the war were coming over to join them.

My father and I made friends with our table-neighbours, an American doctor coming over on Red Cross service and his young sister-in-law who had enrolled as a nurse. We used to discuss our chances. "I can't help hoping," said the girl, "that we get some sort of thrill going up the Channel."

We were due to arrive in Liverpool on Saturday, May 8th, and we had all imagined that the attempts would be made in the Irish Sea during our last night. We were wrong. On the Friday afternoon, at about two o'clock, we were off the south-west coast of Ireland, the Old Head of Kinsale was visible in the distance; my father and I had just come out of the dining-room after lunching and were strolling into the lift on "D" deck. "I think we might stay up on deck to-night to see if we get our thrill," he said. I had no time to answer. There was a dull, thud-like, not very loud but unmistakable explosion. It seemed to come from a little below us and about the middle of the vessel on the port side, that was the side towards the land. I turned and came out of the lift; somehow, the stairs seemed safer. My father walked over to look out of a porthole. I did not wait. I had days before made up my mind that if anything happened one's instinct would be to make straight for the boat deck (it is a horrible feeling to stay under cover even for a few moments in a boat that may be sinking), but that one must control that and go first to one's cabin to fetch one's lifebelt and then on to the boat deck. As I ran up the stairs, the boat was already heeling over. As I ran, I thought, "I wonder I'm not more frightened," and then, "I'm beginning to get frightened, but I mustn't let myself."

My cabin was on "B" deck some way down a passage.

On my way I met a stewardess; by this time the boat had heeled over very much, and as we each ran along holding the rail on the lower side of the passage we collided, and wasted a minute or so making polite apologies to each other.

I collected my lifebelt, the "Boddy" belt provided by the Cunard Company. On my way back I ran into my father's cabin and took out one of his belts, fearing that he might be occupied with his papers and forget to fetch one for himself. Then I went up on to "A" deck (the boat deck). Here there was, of course, a choice of sides. I chose the starboard side, feeling that it would somehow be safer to be as far away from the submarine as possible. The side further from the submarine was also the higher out of the water, as the boat had listed over towards the side on which she had been hit and the deck was now slanting at a considerable angle; and to be as high as possible out of the water felt safer too.

As I came out into the sunlight, I saw standing together the American doctor, Dr. F——, and his sister-in-law, Miss C——. I asked if I might stay beside them until I caught sight of my father, which I made sure of doing soon. I put on my own lifebelt and held the other in my hand. Just after I reached the deck a stream of steerage passengers came rushing up from below and fought their way into the boat nearest us, which was being lowered. They were white-faced and terrified; I think they were shrieking; there was no kind of order—the strongest got there first, the weak were pushed aside. Here and there a man had his arm round a woman's waist and bore her along with him; but there were no children to be seen; no children could have lived in that throng. They rushed a boat before it was ready for them. A ship's officer made some feeble attempt to prevent them, but there was no real attempt at order or

discipline. As we watched, I turned to the American girl. . . . "I always thought a shipwreck was a well-organised affair." "So did I," said she, "but I've learnt a devil of a lot in the last five minutes." Two seamen began to lower the boat, which was full to overflowing, but no one was in command of them. One man lowered his end quickly, the other lowered his end slowly; the boat was in an almost perpendicular position when it reached the water. Half the people fell out, but the boat did not capsize, and I think most of them scrambled back afterwards. I do not know. We turned away and did not look. It was not safe to look at horrible things just then. Curious that it never for a moment struck any of us as possible to attempt to get into the boat ourselves. Even at that moment death would have seemed better than to make part of that terror-infected crowd. I remember regretfully thinking something of this sort.

That was the last boat I saw lowered. It became impossible to lower any more from our side owing to the list on the ship. No one else except that white-faced stream seemed to lose control. A number of people were moving about the deck, gently and vaguely. They reminded one of a swarm of bees who do not know where the queen has gone. Presently Dr. F—— decided to go down and fetch lifebelts for himself and his sister-in-law. Whilst he was away, the vessel righted herself perceptibly, and word was passed round that the bulkheads had been closed and the danger was over. We laughed and shook hands, and I said, "Well, you've had your thrill all right." "I never want another," she answered. Soon after, the doctor returned bearing two lifebelts. He said he had had to wade through deep water down below to get them.

Whilst we were standing, I unhooked my skirt so that it

should come straight off and not impede me in the water. The list on the ship soon got worse again, and, indeed, became very bad. Presently Dr. F—— said he thought we had better jump into the sea. (We had thought of doing so before, but word had been passed round from the captain that it was better to stay where we were.) Dr. F—— and Miss C—— moved towards the edge of the deck where the boat had been and there was no railing. I followed them, feeling frightened at the idea of jumping so far (it was, I believe, some sixty feet normally from "A" deck to the sea), and telling myself how ridiculous I was to have physical fear of the jump when we stood in such grave danger as we did. I think others must have had the same fear, for a little crowd stood hesitating on the brink and kept me back. And then, suddenly, I saw that the water had come over on to the deck. We were not, as I had thought, sixty feet above the sea; we were already under the sea. I saw the water green just about up to my knees. I do not remember its coming up further; that must all have happened in a second. The ship sank and I was sucked right down with her.

The next thing I can remember was being deep down under the water. It was very dark, nearly black. I fought to come up. I was terrified of being caught on some part of the ship and kept down. That was the worst moment of terror, the only moment of acute terror, that I knew. My wrist did catch on a rope. I was scarcely aware of it at the time, but I have the mark on me to this day. At first I swallowed a lot of water; then I remembered that I had read that one should not swallow water, so I shut my mouth. Something bothered me in my right hand and prevented me striking out with it; I discovered that it was the lifebelt I had been holding for my father. As I reached the surface



I grasped a little bit of board, quite thin, a few inches wide and perhaps two or three feet long. I thought this was keeping me afloat. I was wrong. My most excellent lifebelt was doing that. But everything that happened after I had been submerged was a little misty and vague; I was slightly stupefied from then on.

When I came to the surface I found that I formed part of a large, round, floating island composed of people and *débris* of all sorts, lying so close together that at first there was not very much water noticeable in between. People, boats, hencoops, chairs, rafts, boards and goodness knows what besides, all floating cheek by jowl. A man with a white face and yellow moustache came and held on to the other end of my board. I did not quite like it, for I felt it was not large enough for two, but I did not feel justified in objecting. Every now and again he would try and move round towards my end of the board. This frightened me; I scarcely knew why at the time (I was probably quite right to be frightened; it is likely enough that he wanted to hold on to me). I summoned up my strength—to speak was an effort—and told him to go back to his own end, so that we might keep the board properly balanced. He said nothing and just meekly went back. After a while I noticed that he had disappeared. I don't know what had happened to him. He may have gone off to a hencoop which was floating near by. I don't know whether he had a lifebelt on or not. Somehow I think not.

Many people were praying aloud in a curious, unemotional monotone; others were shouting for help in much the same slow, impersonal chant: "Bo-at . . . bo-at . . . bo-at. . . ." I shouted for a minute or two, but it was obvious that there was no chance of any boat responding, so I soon desisted. One or two boats were visible, but they

were a long way away from where I was, and clearly had all they could do to pick up the people close beside them. So far as I could see, they did not appear to be moving much. By and by my legs got bitterly cold, and I decided to try to swim to a boat so as to get them out of the cold water, but it was a big effort swimming (I could normally swim a hundred yards or so, but I was not an expert swimmer). I only swam a few strokes and almost immediately gave up the attempt, because I did not see how I could get along without letting go of my piece of board, which nothing would have induced me to abandon.

There was no acute feeling of fear whilst one was floating in the water. I can remember feeling thankful that I had not been drowned underneath, but had reached the surface safely, and thinking that even if the worst happened there could be nothing unbearable to go through now that my head was above the water. The lifebelt held one up in a comfortable sitting position, with one's head lying rather back, as if one were in a hammock. One was a little dazed and rather stupid and vague. I doubt whether any of the people in the water were acutely frightened or in any consciously unbearable agony of mind. When Death is as close as he was then, the sharp agony of fear is not there; the thing is too overwhelming and stunning for that. One has the sense of something taking care of one—I don't mean in the sense of protecting one from death; rather of death itself being a benignant power. At moments I wondered whether the whole thing was perhaps a nightmare from which I should wake, and once—half laughing, I think—I wondered, looking round on the sun and pale blue sky and calm sea, whether I had reached heaven without knowing it—and devoutly hoped I hadn't.

One was acutely uncomfortable, no more than that. A

discomfort mainly due to the intense cold, but further—at least so far as I was concerned—to the fact that, being a very bad sailor, when presently a little swell got up, I was seasick. I remember, as I sat in the water, I thought out an improvement which I considered should be adopted for all lifebelts. There should be, I thought, a little bottle of chloroform strapped into each belt, so that one could inhale it and lose consciousness when one wished to. I must have been exceedingly uncomfortable before I thought of that.

The swell of the sea had the effect of causing the close-packed island of wreckage and people to drift apart. Presently I was a hundred yards or more away from anyone else. I looked up at the sun, which was high in the sky, and wished that I might lose consciousness. I don't know how long after that I did lose it, but that is the last thing I remember in the water.

The next thing I remember is lying naked between blankets on a deck in the dark. (I was, I discovered later, on a tiny patrol steamer named *The Bluebell*.) Every now and again a sailor came and looked at me and said, "That's better." I had a vague idea that something had happened, but I thought that I was still on the deck of the *Lusitania*, and I was vaguely annoyed that some unknown sailor should be attending to me instead of my own stewardess. Gradually memory came back. The sailor offered me a cup of lukewarm tea, which I drank (we were on a teetotal vessel). There did not seem much wrong with me except that my whole body was shaking violently and my teeth were chattering like castanets, as I had never supposed teeth could chatter, and that I had a violent pain in the small of my back, which I suppose was rheumatism. The sailor said he thought I had better go below, as it would be warmer.

"We left you up here to begin with," he explained, "as we thought you were dead, and it did not seem worth while cumbering up the cabin with you." There was some discussion as to how to get me down the cabin stairs. "It took three men to lift you on board," someone explained. I said that I thought I could walk; so, supported on either arm and with a third man holding back my dripping hair, I managed to get down. I was put into the captain's bunk, whence someone rather further recovered was ejected to make room for me. The warmth below was delicious; it seemed to make one almost delirious. I should say that almost all of us down there (I do not know how many rescued were on board; I can remember noticing five or six, but probably there were thirty or forty) were a little drunk with the heat and the light and the joy of knowing ourselves to be alive. We were talking at the tops of our voices and laughing a great deal. At one time I was talking and laughing with some woman when a sailor came in and asked us if we had lost anyone in the wreck. I can remember the sudden sobering with which we answered. I did not then know what had happened to my father; she was almost sure that her husband was drowned. He was, she had already told me (there are no veils just after a shipwreck), all she had in the world. It seemed that his loss probably meant the breaking up of her whole life, yet at that moment she was full of cheerfulness and laughter.

I can remember two exceptions to the general merriment. The captain of the *Lusitania* was amongst those rescued on our little boat, but I never heard him speak. The other exception was a woman, who sat silent in the outer cabin. Presently she began to speak. Quietly, gently, in a low, rather monotonous voice, she described how she had lost her child. She had, so far as I can now recollect, been made to

place him on a raft, which, owing to some mismanagement, had capsized. She considered that his death had been unnecessary; that it had been due to the lack of organisation and discipline on board, and gently, dispassionately, she said so to the captain of the *Lusitania*. She further stated her intention of saying so publicly later. It seemed to me, fresh from that incompetent muddle on the *Lusitania's* deck, that she entirely proved her case. A sailor who came in to attend to me suggested that she was hysterical. She appeared to me to be the one person on board who was not.

It must have been about half-past nine at night when I came to myself on board *The Bluebell*. As to the interval, I heard afterwards that I had been picked up at dusk by a rowing-boat; that in the gathering darkness they had very nearly missed me, but that by some curious chance a wicker chair had floated up under me (it must have happened after I lost consciousness); that this had both helped to raise me further out of the water than I should otherwise have floated (and so likely enough saved my life by lessening the strain on me) and had made a slightly larger mark which had been noticed in the water, and they had rowed to it. The little boat had transferred me to *The Bluebell*. I was handed up to it along with a lot of dead bodies, but the midshipman who handed me on board said, "I rather think there's some life in this woman; you'd better try and see." So they did. They told me that when I recovered I went straight off to sleep without regaining consciousness, and had slept for two hours before I came to myself on the deck of *The Bluebell* in the dark.

We got into Queenstown Harbour about eleven. A man (the steward who had waited at our table on the *Lusitania*) came on board and told me that my father had been rescued and was already on shore. When we came alongside, the

captain of *The Bluebell* came in and asked if I could go ashore, as he wanted to move on again. I said certainly, but not wrapped in one tiny blanket. Modesty, which had been completely absent for some hours, was beginning faintly to return. I said I could do it if only I had a couple of safety-pins to fasten the thing together; but it was a man's ship, and the idea of safety-pins produced hoots of laughter. Finally someone went ashore and borrowed a "British Warm" from one of the soldiers on the quay. Clad in this, with the blanket tucked round my waist underneath it, and wearing the captain's carpet slippers, I started for the shore. The gangway was a difficult obstacle. It was so placed that it meant stepping up eighteen inches or possibly a couple of feet. I must have been pretty weak, for I had to get down on to my hands and knees and crawl on to it.

At the other end of the gangway my father was waiting.

\* \* \* \* \*

We went across the big dark quay to a tiny little brightly lit hut, a Customs Office maybe or a ticket office. Inside we sat down on a sofa and hugged each other.

Some man asked what I wanted, and I said brandy. The man said that brandy was rather dangerous when one was exhausted, but I said I would take the risk, and I got the brandy. Without it I do not know how I could have walked to the hotel, though it was only a few yards away. The hotel—I have forgotten its name—was, inappropriately enough, still kept by a German (his sister had been interned, but for some reason he had been left at large and in control of this quay-side inn). It was by far the dirtiest place I have ever seen. My father had booked a room for himself there earlier in the evening, which he now gave up to me. It was on the first floor and the steps of the stairs were

shallow, but it was a big struggle to get up to it. I clung to the banisters, rested after every two steps, and felt very sick. Once in the room, I got, still wrapped in my blanket, which looked cleaner than the bed-clothes, into bed. There seemed to be no food in the hotel, but in the end they brought me some biscuits and fizzy lemonade. At first I thought the skirting-board round the edge of the carpet was painted white, but I discovered later that it was really black but covered inch deep in grey dust.

There was a second bed in the room, and presently a group of four or five people brought in another woman. Her son was with her and several other men. She appeared to be in hysterics, and kept on monotonously repeating that her husband at home in England didn't know they were safe. Her son assured her again and again that he had sent him a telegram to Liverpool the minute they landed. She did not seem to hear, but just went on repeating in a monotonous sing-song voice that Jack didn't know they were safe. I called the son across to me and made a note of his Christian name and that of his father in case I had to spend the night trying to reassure her. However, the moment the door shut behind them she became perfectly sane and collected. She was, however, still slightly worried about her husband. "But," said I, "that's quite all right; didn't you hear your son say he had sent him a wire directly you got to shore?" "Oh! I know that," she replied, "but you don't imagine they'll let private telegrams through to-night, do you?"

We talked most of the night, and she told me what had happened to her in the wreck. She was travelling, it seemed, with her son and her son's friend. The son had been badly wounded at the front, and they had gone over thinking the voyage might help him to complete his recovery. They

had not meant to come home so soon, but her husband had got nervous at the increase of German submarine successes and had wired to them to come back as quickly as possible. So they had caught the first boat available, which was the *Lusitania*.

After the ship sank, she and her son and his friend had found themselves on a raft so overloaded that it was beginning to sink. So the three of them, all strong swimmers, had gone off to a neighbouring floating mass in the water, which turned out to be a piano in a packing-case. They settled themselves on top of it, but presently, when a slight swell got up, the piano turned turtle at every wave and threw them underneath, and they had to climb on again from the other side. This went on for two hours and a half. Finally a small steamer appeared and came up to rescue them. Its arrival made an extra big wave. The piano turned turtle as usual, and Mrs. X—— (I have long ago forgotten her name) was shot down into the water and hit her head against the steamer's screw or paddle. However, the steamer had luckily stopped moving and not much damage was done. But this did perhaps account for the hysterics.

She told me another story which has stayed in my memory. She had with her some jewels which she greatly valued, and after reading the warning issued by the German Embassy on the morning the *Lusitania* left New York, she had determined to save them and had carried them with her everywhere all through the voyage. When the explosion happened she was down at lunch, the jewels in their bag resting on the table beside her. And then for the first time during the whole voyage she forgot them. I suppose they are on that luncheon table still.

We talked till three in the morning, and then I persuaded her to try to go to sleep, which she succeeded in doing for a



short while. But I was still too much excited, and never slept at all that night. At five o'clock some reporters walked into the bedroom to get our story of the disaster, which we gave them.

One of the first people to come to see us the next morning was Miss C——, the pretty American girl. She was still dressed in the neat fawn tweed coat and skirt which she had had on when I saw her step off the deck the day before, and it looked as smart and well tailored as if it had just come out of the shop. It seemed that, though she had partly unhooked it on deck, when I had unhooked mine, modesty had prevented her from undoing quite all the hooks. The result was that it had stayed on, and when she was sucked below as the ship sank, it caught on something and prevented her coming straight to the surface, so that by the time she did reach it she was unconscious. She was pulled on to a raft, but the people on it thought she was dead, and there was no room on the raft for bodies, so they were just going to throw her back into the water, when one of them, a Canadian nurse, saw a throbbing in her throat. She was kept on board to see if the nurse was right. The nurse worked at her, and in a short while she came round. And a couple of hours later, when the steamers came on the scene, the raft-load was picked up. Her brother-in-law, the doctor, had been saved too. He had come up conscious and swum to a boat—a boat in which was an Italian surgeon, who, so he told us, operated then and there on the leg of one of the crew, which had been badly damaged by the explosion, with a pen-knife.

My father soon came in, and he and I exchanged stories. Like most of the men, expert or otherwise, on board, he had not believed that a single torpedo could sink us, and it

seemed that he had thought that there could be no immediate hurry, and that was why he had strolled over to look out of one of the portholes. But as the ship heeled over to port almost instantaneously, he went straight up on deck, where he looked about for me. But he—wisely—went out on to the port side, whereas I had gone out on to the starboard side. (Anyhow, in that crowd of two thousand people our chances of meeting would have been small.) He chose the port side, he said, chiefly because the crowd went the other way, and he never believed in following the crowd. Certainly it was the intelligent side to choose, since boats could be launched from that side right up to the moment the ship sank, whereas owing to the camber of the ship it soon ceased to be practicable to launch them from the other side.

In the end my father owed his life to the fact that he chose the port side, for he would never have survived in the water. After looking about for a bit, he realised that he had no lifebelt and went downstairs to get one. Someone (a steward, I think) gave him a Gieve. He tried to blow it up, but it would not blow, and so he went down to his cabin to get one off his bed, but they had all been taken. Finally he found three Boddy belts in his cupboard (the regulation ship's lifebelt of that date and a most effective one). He came up on deck again just as the last boat—half empty—was being launched. The *Lusitania* "A" deck was by this time level with the water, and already the boat was about a foot away from the edge of the ship. A woman holding a small child hesitated whether to dare to step over to it. He gave her a shove and sprang after her himself. As the boat drew away, the *Lusitania* slowly sank, and one of her funnels came over to within a few feet of the boat. It seemed as if it must sink it, but she was sinking by the bow as well as rolling over, and the funnel, passing within a few

feet of their heads, sank just beyond them. My father had timed the explosion, and he looked at his watch when the ship disappeared. The whole thing had taken twelve and a half minutes.

The boat, which was only half full of people, was also half full of water; however, they baled it out and picked up some more people, and after rowing about for two and a half hours were taken on board by a small steamer and brought to Queenstown, which they reached about six o'clock. There my father chanced on a Catholic priest, to whom I shall always be grateful, who took him off to have some dinner and plied him with brandy. My father protested that he had not tasted alcohol for fifteen years, but was in no state to withstand the reply that in any case he was going to have some now. He confided to the priest his dilemma about my mother. He must let her know he was safe, yet he could not wire without mentioning me, and he gravely feared, though still uncertain, that I was lost. Together they composed a telegram. It ran: "Landed safely; Margaret not yet, but several boats still to come." In point of fact, no private telegrams were allowed through that day, and she did not receive it until after she knew that we had both been saved.

The next few hours must have seemed like a lifetime. Boat after boat came in with its big load of dead, its smaller load of living. He waited on the quay. . . .

Someone who met my father just then said that his face seemed for a few weeks to have turned into that of an old man, but I noticed nothing except that for a few days his temper with strangers was rather short. I am always glad to remember, too, that it was still sufficiently out of hand to tell our hotel-keeper all he thought about his "damned dog-kennel" before we left.

Later that same morning, whilst we still lay naked in our blankets in bed, a kind young woman who happened to be staying in the hotel came and made notes of all our requirements (hairpins, underclothing, stockings, blouse, coat and skirt, etc.), and went off to Cork to buy them for us so that we might be able to get up. One odd thing that had happened to us all was that we were exceedingly dirty. One might have supposed that four hours in the water would have washed one clean, but, on the contrary, I was covered with black-brown dirt (incidentally, why I don't know, I was bruised from head to foot). I went to have a bath, but really that hotel bath was so filthy that it was a question whether one came out cleaner or dirtier than one went in. Then we put on the clothes from Cork—it was late afternoon by this time. The American doctor had advised staying in bed till then, and indeed all day, but by that time bed in that room had become boring. So we got up and went down to dinner. We four—my father and I and the American doctor and his sister-in-law—sat together and exchanged all the news that we had heard. Often after a sudden catastrophe men's tongues are unloosed. We had heard many strange things.

After dinner my father and I went for a walk in the dark to have a look at Queenstown—a walk of which one incident recurs to me. A drunken inhabitant lurched up to us just after nine o'clock and confidently inquired whether any pubs were still open (under war-time regulations there they were all obliged to close at nine). My father, still very irritable, gazed at him in revolted disgust: "No, thank God!" he replied. The disappointed and startled drunkard vanished. I enjoyed that little interchange.

Then we came home and went to bed. The night before my father had spent with most of the other men on the

drawing-room floor. They had all been kept awake by one of their number who had got drunk and insisted on singing all night—until at six in the morning my father had got up and taken him for a walk, leaving the others to rest in peace.

But the jewel-lady had now left (gone on to Cork, I imagine), and, since he badly needed rest, I persuaded my father to take her bed. Again (except for about half an hour, when I dreamt I was being shipwrecked) I could not sleep, and at about five o'clock I came to the conclusion that I was very ill. I took my temperature (someone had bought a thermometer the day before); it was 102. I decided that I was quite possibly going to die, but I decided also that nothing would induce me to die in that filthy hotel. At eight o'clock, when my father woke up, I told him that I was sure I was very ill and that I could not bear to die in that hotel—would he please have me moved? He replied that he would see to it at once, and went off full of energy and determination.

Presently he returned. He had found two doctors. One a local man, who said that it would certainly kill me to move me; the other the American doctor, who strongly shared our view of the hotel and thought that, with due precautions taken, moving might turn out to be the lesser of two evils. My father did not believe the local doctor, of whose intelligence he had formed a poor opinion. So he had arranged for a stretcher party to come in time to carry me down to the train which left for Dublin that morning, where he had reserved a seat for me to lie on at full length. Moreover, the American doctor was going by the same train and could keep an eye on me.

Much as I wanted to get out of that hotel, I did not really want to leave it at the cost of my life, and I felt a trifle anxious lest the local doctor, in spite of my father's poor

opinion of his brains, might be right. However, by this time I was beginning to feel rather dazed and vague, and was no longer capable of making any decision for myself. Presently the ambulance men came and carried me down to the train. The Irish doctor had said that if I did go I ought to be fed all the way on teaspoonfuls of whisky; the American doctor, on the other hand, held teetotal views. We compromised on carrying with us a bottle of whisky, which was in fact never uncorked. At Dublin another ambulance met us and took me to the Shelbourne Hotel, where I got between clean sheets and spent three weeks in bed with bronchial pneumonia.

\* \* \* \* \*


Someone asked me not long ago whether the *Lusitania* experience had altered my view of human nature. It did not alter my opinion of human nature in general. I should scarcely, I think, have expected that, even had the material for a change of opinion been there—for after those first few minutes on deck I saw very little of what happened, and once I had been under water, moreover, I was too dazed to take it in if I had. I was spared the horrors that haunted so many of the survivors.

What it did do was to alter my opinion of myself. I had lacked self-confidence. I knew that I was frightened of many things. If anyone had asked me whether I should behave as I ought in a shipwreck I should have had the gravest doubts. And here I had got through this test without disgracing myself. I had found that when the moment came I could control my fear. True, the opportunities for disgracing myself had been very small. But all the same it altered my view of myself. It combined with the American visit to increase my self-confidence. It seems to me likely

enough that—given one was not caught in the infection of a panic, when I imagine that only the thoroughly disciplined or unusually strong-nerved would remain immune—an experience of the sort would have much the same effect on many people's opinion of themselves.

Another result of that disaster was to take away my fear of water. At least, it was about then that it vanished, and I think it must have been the *Lusitania* that did it. In 1915 I could not swim more than a hundred yards or so, and having my head under water terrified me so much that I had never dared to learn to dive. To-day I can, if given time—very much time—swim a mile, and I enjoy diving. Other causes (notably the Mediterranean in summer) have contributed to the change no doubt, but I think that that shipwreck had a good deal to do with it.

It altered me in one other respect. Curiously enough, for that is not what I should have expected, it very largely took away the fear (in my childish and adolescent days it had been a terrified horror) of death. I do not quite understand how or why it did this. The only explanation I can give is that when I was lying back in that sunlit water I was, and I knew it, very near to death. I wanted to live, of course. Life was far too exciting and pleasant and interesting to leave (indeed, when for one semi-conscious delirious moment I thought, looking up at the beautiful blue sky, that perhaps I was now really dead and in heaven, I felt most anxious and depressed at the idea). But death was not frightening; rather, somehow, one had a protected feeling, as if it were a kindly thing.



## CHAPTER XVII

### LONDON IN WAR-TIME

WHEN one remembers that in those years men were living in the trenches for months on end, and when, from every country in Europe, they were enduring, often without apparent damage, immeasurable physical suffering and mental strain, one feels ashamed to admit that so comparatively small a thing as the *Lusitania* should have left any after-effects—but it did. The worst of them was that for about eighteen months afterwards I used to wake every night suddenly at half-past two in a sweat of terror. Every night I used to dread going to bed and to sleep, knowing that this horror must come.

This, for some unknown reason, I put down, not to its obvious cause, but to the onset of old age, which, being in a mood of depression, I supposed I had now reached. I assumed, therefore, that there was nothing to be done about it. How I could seriously have supposed that everyone over the age of thirty suffered such tortures I cannot now imagine. It is amazing what the young will put down to old age. If old age were anything approaching the hell they fancy it to be, everyone would undoubtedly commit suicide at the age of thirty-five. Having decided, however, that my nightly terror was due to senility, I endured it without saying a word to anyone, or consulting a doctor. Though I do not suppose anyone could have done much about it, they might at least have put me to bed for a few weeks, which no doubt was what I needed, but did not get; for, my father having to go straight back to America on munitions business, I was left



with the whole responsibility for his affairs on my shoulders, and had a good deal more work to do than usual.

Another aftermath of the *Lusitania* was a horror of being shut in under water. I recognised this all right as a legacy from the shipwreck, which, by the way, never directly in itself frightened me at all. I could think of it without any distress; indeed, with all the pleasure of interest and excitement—I had not, it must be remembered, seen any of the horrors, I was too much in the middle of it for that—and only once afterwards did I ever have a nightmare of a ship going down. But since my neurosis took the form of dreading beyond all things going through the Severn Tunnel (every time I went I insistently pictured the tunnel giving way, the water rushing in, and the passengers being caught and suffocated and drowned like rats in a trap in the little boxes of carriages), and there was no other practical way of travelling between Cardiff and London except by the Severn Tunnel, I just had to bear it as best I could, and that very often; for during those years half of my work lay in Cardiff and half in London, so that I was up and down twice a week or more. Another hang-over from the *Lusitania*—as I realised with relief when it passed off—was an unreasoning terror of air-raids. I used to try to plan to keep out of London on full-moon nights (that was during the early days of the war when the Zepps used to come, and needed full moons: the later aeroplane raids always happened on moonless nights), but it was a bit difficult to think up thoroughly plausible excuses for fixing meetings on other than the full-moon nights. I often failed to manœuvre it. This period lasted only for about eighteen months, after which I more or less recovered my nerves, which was a great comfort.

These things gave me some measure of what a man whose nerves had gone must feel. If four hours' danger and

exposure could do all that to me, what must one feel like after months in the trenches? I still cannot understand how any of our soldiers remained sane.

\* \* \* \* \*

When my father was taken into the Ministry I got on to a good many new and more important Boards than I had ever been on before, Boards of which he, formerly, had been a member. I was acting really as a kind of unofficial liaison officer to report to him how things were going and to give the Board his view on any line of policy. The other members of the Board liked the plan. It relieved them to a certain degree of some sense of responsibility; and that, combined with the fact that it was war-time, when, in a topsy-turvy world, all the old rules and customs seemed to have gone by the board, reconciled—or partially reconciled—the directors, even the most conservative, to an innovation which in normal circumstances they would have viewed with horror. The man who helped me in the whole matter and did the most to smooth over the difficulties and tone down the uneasiness that some of the more old-fashioned members of the Boards experienced at this unheard-of break with tradition was the late Lord Buckland, then Mr. Seymour Berry (elder brother of Lord Camrose and Sir Gomer Berry). At that time he was in very close touch with my father, who had always been a friend of his and of his father's. The older man was glad to have near him this "live wire," regarded his successes with a half-fatherly pride (Lord Buckland was already then well known in South Wales), and turned to him for much help with his private affairs when the State claimed his own full time and attention; Seymour Berry was more deeply in his confidence than anyone else in the business world, and acted for him in many an interesting deal.

Lord Buckland was as brilliant a man in his own field as I have ever met, and one learnt much from watching his methods in business. Rather above medium height, slightly built, dark, with a curiously shaped head, noticeable eyes, and an unusually sensitive mouth, it was obvious to anyone who knew him that he was equipped for success of some kind, although it might have been difficult to say that he was better equipped in brain or character for one special branch than for several others. It would have been easy to imagine him as an eminent K.C., as a successful—and possibly original—Chancellor of the Exchequer, or as a diplomatist. Some of those who knew him were inclined to attribute a large part of his success to his wonderful head for figures, and certainly he had a remarkable financial genius and a capacity for turning an X-ray-like power of concentration on to some knotty problem, which would suddenly reveal many points which would otherwise have passed unnoticed. I should have hesitated, however, to agree with those who ascribed his success chiefly to his capacity for figures. To the power of sudden and intense concentration on any subject which required it, perhaps. To his curious instinctive knowledge of men, perhaps also. But the keynote of Lord Buckland's success seemed to me to be his capacity for working with a group—nay, it was more than a capacity; it was, I think, a necessity. It was almost impossible to imagine him working alone—he must work in a team, and he must like the team he worked with—and, in later years, led. Inside the group, which contained a small inside kernel and an outer, larger ring, there was perfect loyalty, absolute harmony; inside it “what touched one touched all.” And the group worked as one man. Where any one of the individuals who composed it might fail to win through, this group, working as one, was an almost

irresistible force—it rolled forward like a snowball, occasionally adding to itself, but never turned from its object. The men who composed it were each of them experts at their own job; they each brought their quota of knowledge and unusual capacity and energy—they were not, apparently, chosen on that account; they were apparently chosen because they were excellent fellows, but they were very much more than that. Seymour Berry was in no way a conservatively minded or tradition-ridden man—as my father's daughter he accepted me without question as one of the group. And, once one had been accepted by him, the rest of the group almost automatically followed his lead. I owed an enormous amount to Lord Buckland. And incidentally that group lesson was a very useful one to mark, to learn, and to digest.

It seemed to me that, so far as the surface technique of easing this new situation was concerned (and in such matters surface technique is of real importance), there was one all-important guiding principle to bear in mind. It was desirable, so far as might be, to remind the other directors as little as possible that there was any difference in the condition of this Board from others on which they sat. So long as they still thought of me as Woman, until they had got used to me and just thought of me as myself, they must be made to remember as little as possible that there was a woman in the room. Three things were likely to remind them of her presence—(a) direct realisation, (b) the question of smoking, (c) the question of swearing. There were, therefore, three points to be considered.

So far as direct realisation was concerned, I could not do very much, but I might do a little. I met it, so far as it could be met, by speaking (except when I had something really urgent or important to say) as little as ever I could. If the

matter of what I had to say was sufficiently important they would forget the voice it was spoken in, but if it was trivial they would all be conscious of the woman's voice intervening in their discussions.

The second point, smoking, was really easy enough. These men were in the habit of smoking (some of them heavily), and many of them belonged to a world in which, to some degree, the old drawing-room taboo against women smoking or sitting amidst clouds of tobacco still held; they just had to be made to realise that with me it did not hold in the least. Otherwise there was the danger that they might try to be polite, cut down their smoking, and soon come to find me a perpetual and intolerable nuisance. So far as that was concerned, I began, on every Board, by smoking directly I came into the room, and smoked always, at first consciously but very soon unconsciously, considerably more at Board meetings than I was normally in the habit of doing.

Lastly, there was the question of swearing. These men used probably—at least, some of them did—a considerable amount of bad language. Well, here there was, so far as I could see, nothing to be done. They might, some of them must, miss being able to use all licence in their speech, but they would feel far more self-conscious and uncomfortable if they swore in front of me than if they were merely forced to refrain from it. One could not prevent them giving it up. They did so most strictly. To this day if a man so much as says "damn" in my presence (and in all the years I have sat on Boards that is the worst swear-word I have ever heard) he turns and apologises. I on my side refrained from ever using the word myself. I dislike swearing and do it rarely, but my language is distinctly more pure at Board meetings than it is if I happen to feel cross in my own drawing-room.

I enjoyed all those new Board meetings; the feeling of tackling interesting problems, concentrating on them, getting things done, was exhilarating. Reporting them back to my father and discussing them with him was fun.

I must say that I like business men, especially the big ones. They smell neither of the drawing-room nor of the studio—smells I do not much care for—on the contrary. They have no affectations and no affected jargon, no poses and very little self-consciousness—that is a pleasant change to the editor of a weekly review who has to live partly in Bloomsbury. They have as a rule straightforwardness, friendliness, lack of much touchiness or jealousy—at least, as compared with artists—and the big ones almost all have vitality. And besides that they are efficient, they get things done. I like people who can get things done. There is a straightforward practical simplicity about the right kind of business man, a determination to do the thing that needs doing, and do it in the best, simplest, most efficient way possible, which is oddly rare in any other profession. He knows that he himself will suffer for any mistakes he makes. For extravagance or unnecessary frills—and for omissions just as much as for commissions. The profession is, in fact, not fool-proof. That is where business men seem to me to have such a big advantage in training for life over Civil Servants—that if they spend money their own pockets will know it, and if they fail it is not merely the State who will get hurt, but they themselves who, in the last resort, will go bankrupt. In that knowledge lies, as has been said, the whole difference between the amateur and the professional.

And business men know, too, exactly what they are doing. They know when they are trying to cheat you, which is more than most people do, and they know also that it is for themselves that they are seeking advantage, for their own profit,

and not for the State or for Charity or for anyone else. They cannot bluff their consciences. Few men, at least few Englishmen, care to think of themselves as cheats. That is why one is much less likely to be swindled by a business man than by a Civil Servant, an artist, a writer, a politician or (above all) a protected woman—these cheat far more often.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*                      \*

In February 1918 I was offered a new post. I was to work in the Ministry of National Service in connection with the enlistment for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. I had served under the same Ministry in Cardiff for a short while earlier in the war, but this was the first time I had been offered a big job in one of the important ministries. I accepted with enthusiasm, gave up temporarily all my business work, and devoted myself to the new job. I found it, however, on the whole disappointing. Most of the work which our department had been brought into being to do was already being done by the Ministry of Labour, and old departments do not easily hand over big chunks of their work to new ministries. We were able to do useful scraps of work here and there, but not much more.

Humphrey had been since the beginning of the war in the Remounts, and was at that time quartered down at Bristol. I used to go down for week-ends, but, whilst living in London, was sharing a flat in Chelsea with a cousin—Nina Jameson (the same one who in my youth had accompanied me back from Henley)—who shortly afterwards married.

My horror of air-raids had at last gone. No one, of course, or at least very few, could actually enjoy a raid, but one did seem, after a while, to settle down to them. The first one we experienced in Chelsea Court was also the worst. A

whole building in the Royal Hospital Gardens, within a quarter of a mile of us, was annihilated, so that when we walked past it next morning on our way to work there was nothing left at all, only a great hole in the ground where the day before had been a house. We were told that the people who lived there had been out at dinner the night before, but that their children had been at home, asleep in bed. When the house was hit the explosion reverberated all through Chelsea, and our own tall building of flats seemed to sway right over and back again.

During that first air-raid we went down to the flat of the woman below. It seemed safer than ours, which was next but one to the top of the building. But she was a pacifist, and proceeded to discuss pacifism. Pacifism during an air-raid seems curiously inappropriate, so we never went again. We just stayed in our own flat, supposing that after all one floor more or less would not make much difference to us if the building did chance to be hit.

Nina even got to the point of going to the window to watch the searchlights, a thing which one was strictly enjoined by the authorities not to do, and at last of going to sleep in the middle of the raids when they lasted too long. I never reached that stage myself.

\* \* \* \* \*

When I said that no one could enjoy an air-raid I should perhaps have made an exception of Aunt Lotty. She came the nearest to it of anyone that I knew. Her zest for adventure never fails her, and for months—nay, years—she passionately desired to be present when the planes came over. But she is a highly conscientious woman. In war-time travelling for pleasure was frowned upon. Travelling in search of air-raids was obviously a form of travelling for



pleasure. Aunt Lotty, in spite of her desires, could not feel justified in stirring out of her Monmouthshire cottage. At last, in the early months of 1918, she had the bright idea of putting her age back by some fifteen years or so, and came up to London on the justifiable plea of trying to become a Waac.

She was lodged at Connaught House and used to come over to our Chelsea flat for supper, and one evening when she was there a raid began. Aunt Lotty was delighted. We, however, failed to share her enthusiasm. I ran down the passage to put some brown paper round the light in the hall, which we feared might show (a thing strictly forbidden), as our blinds had not yet been properly adjusted. I could find nothing to stand upon but a kitchen chair one of whose legs was short, and when I stood up on the chair I found, greatly to my surprise, for I had had no idea that I was trembling, that it was rattling beneath me like a castanet. I got down as quickly as might be lest Aunt Lotty should hear this testimony to her niece's cowardice. I do not think that she heard. The living-room door was shut. But in point of fact I rather think that the evening did something to cure her of her passion for air-raids. The all-clear signal was not given till after one o'clock, and the Connaught House authorities would not allow her to leave us till it had sounded. To sit for hours getting sleepier and sleepier lacked drama. Aunt Lotty likes to go to bed at ten o'clock.

It is possible that had fate glued my mother to a Monmouthshire cottage she might have shared Aunt Lotty's eagerness. She, however, had every opportunity to get her fill of air-raids. Her attitude towards them appeared to be from the start one of complete indifference. During one of the early Zepp raids we were giving a dinner party at the



*(Photo Hugh Cecil*

SYBIL, VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA.



Carlton—my father, my mother and I. We were sitting in the part over which there stretches the dome of a glass roof. Between the noise of our guns and explosions we could hear the heavy drone of the Zeppelins flying low above us. Some of the guests looked frightened. However, there was nothing to be done except carry on and ignore the thing. Afterwards, driving home, we discussed our reactions. "I found," said my father, "a good deal of difficulty in fixing my attention on the conversation of the lady next to me." "I managed that part all right," said I, "my man was rather interesting, but I felt my heart turn over inside me when the bangs began; I knew that must mean I'd changed colour, and I was dreadfully afraid he'd notice it." "Oh," said my mother, gentle and not in the least proud of herself, but, I suspect, a trifle shocked by these revelations of cowardice in her husband and daughter, "I never felt any difficulties at all." I have always remembered the conversation because that complete *sang-froid* was so like her.

When one looks back to that time, one or two tiny incidents stand out, brightly coloured, from the dark jumble of tension and excitement and anxiety—incidents that seemed to crystallise for one something of the emotion of the time.

There was a week-end I spent down at Penshurst with a cousin whose husband was in France. We went for a walk through Penshurst Park after tea, and in the still summer evening we could hear, or rather feel through the earth, the thud of the big guns across the Channel. She said they were there almost all the time. . . .

And there was a picture in *Punch* that stayed in one's mind because it seemed to typify so much of that queer topsy-turvy period, and of what it portended in the per-

manent alterations in values it was going to leave behind: Two men back on their ninety hours' leave from the front, and one of them stopping transfixed to gaze at the lovely scarlet silver-plated figures at the Horse Guards seated on their beautiful horses in all the glory of their perfect uniforms. The other nudged him to come on, but he wouldn't move. "Look, Jack," he said, "look, there are some *real* soldiers."

Two last memories of that time stand out.

Armistice Day. I had offices in Victoria Street just then, and I had just passed Vauxhall Bridge Road and was walking up the street at eleven o'clock on that eleventh of November 1918 when the maroons boomed out. Then we knew that the horror over in France had stopped, and everyone just went mad. They did not in the first moments do or say very much, only we all just knew. In a minute or two people were laughing and shaking hands. Somewhere someone was singing, or perhaps a band was playing "Tipperary." The tears were pouring down my cheeks. I suppose they were down most of the others'. It was not a thing which just then one would even notice as unusual. It seemed quite natural.

And—how long afterwards I do not remember—Nurse Cavell's funeral. It passed up Victoria Street in the still misty sunlight, and we got out on to our balcony to watch it. Just above it, on a level with our windows, two white butterflies were fluttering. Queer.

\* \* \* \* \*

As the war went on the tension, of course, grew on all of us more and more. We became strung up, emotional. More and more the cracks showed through our stolid English surfaces. All my life I have cried very easily; and

my father at the theatre was often easily moved; but I cannot imagine that in peace-time we should both have wept—and admitted to it—on reading a comic parody of Macaulay's "Horatio" which appeared one week in *Punch*. It may be that that was during his last illness, for I can see our talk about it pictured against the background of the room he died in. Another time when we were going in to business one morning in the train between Newport and Cardiff I was suddenly moved to tears by reading—of all things in the world—a war speech of Mr. Lloyd George's in the morning paper. Even as I wept, I thought, with some scorn of myself, that I must be pretty far gone to allow that to upset me. My father noticed my emotion and asked if there was anything wrong, or anything he could do to help me—but I just said "No"; I was too much ashamed to own up to the origin of the trouble.

\* \* \* \* \*

How far I was in my heart from believing in the *Daily Mail* view of the war I realise now when I remember that of all the war poems that I read only one has lingered in my mind. It purports to give the points of view of the ghosts of privates who have been killed. Privates coming from a number of different countries, both allied and—as we called them then—enemy-alien. The refrain at the end of each verse, whichever private sang it, was the same:

"I gave my life for freedom—this I know,  
For those who bade me fight had told me so. . . ."

It was published in the *Nation*.

I used sometimes to say that very likely in ten years' time we should be shaking hands with Germans, speaking to them, treating them as if they were ordinary human beings


instead of devils incarnate. No one believed me when I said it, and I did not really quite believe myself; but I knew very well, knew it quite consciously, that one could not carry on war without hating the enemy, and that one must just let oneself go to unreasonable hatred and think the worst of the enemy for the time being, even though a piece of one knew that one was believing many lies.

But I do not mean to suggest by any of this that I was ever anywhere near to being a pacifist—that I never was. I did not hold—I do not hold—that force can never be justifiable. I am well aware that should we ever find ourselves embroiled in another big war I should be no more a pacifist than I was in the last one. I was not a pacifist, not because I passionately believed my country to be in the right, though on the whole I accepted the view of the big majority of my fellow countrymen that she was, but because when she was fighting for her life I knew that, right or wrong, the only thing I could do was back her with all my strength, and cease from all criticism, which seemed to me merely defeatist. If you were to see your father beating a small boy, said I to myself, and you thought the child didn't deserve it, you would take its side hotly; but if you saw him fighting a man his own size, whatever your views as to the rights and wrongs of the origin of the quarrel, or the desirability of street brawls, you would back him with all your might so long as the fight was on. One's country is much the same.

That—because I understand so well the point of view of the normal unpacific person—is why I think some kind of world organisation to secure and to enforce peace is more worth fighting for than anything else.

If the world is to stay so that the law of "might is right and let the strongest country win" still holds, then I want mine to be the strongest country and to win. But if we

may obtain to real law and order, to the substitution of right for might, and the judgment of our peers backed by common world authority for the present ordeal by combat, so that no one country wins, but all have justice, then I will submit and that right willingly. I know my attitude of instinctive nationalism will seem dreadful to many people. I am not defending it. I am only pointing out, as I have before in this book, that my reactions are those of the average normal citizen all the world over. They cannot be ignored. They are the reactions which unless we can change the chaotic annihilistic world system of to-day make war forever inevitable. And they are the ones which must be reckoned with and allowed for in any system that is to be evolved by those who want to alter or improve the thing which to-day passes for civilisation.





## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE PEACE RIVER

SHORTLY before the war my father had bought some property of various kinds in Northern Alberta which he had, in fact, never seen. The chief item consisted of a shipping company on the Peace River which owned two boats—one the *D. A. Thomas*, a steamship which once a fortnight during the summer months ran two or three hundred miles down the river from Peace River Crossing to Vermilion Chutes in the prairie country; the other the *Lady Mackworth* (called after me), a small gasoline boat which went close on the same distance up river from Peace River Crossing to Hudson's Hope, which lies among the foot-hills of the Rockies.

The year after his death, when the war was over, my mother and I decided to go and have a look at this property, partly for the fun of it, partly to see whether it was worth keeping, and if not, how best to sell it. Mr. L——, the man who had been largely responsible for persuading my father to buy it, arranged the trip for us and came along himself. In the end, for one reason and another, quite a lot of people joined the party, and in August 1919 about twelve of us left Edmonton by the train for Peace River Crossing. The journey was quite a short one, it took about thirty hours (it takes only seventeen now), but unusual. The lines were laid on a rough level track, the sleepers planted directly in the earth instead of in a specially prepared flint bed, and the track was probably one of the bumpiest in the world. If the train exceeded fifteen miles an hour, it jerked straight off the rails. John Mackworth,

my brother-in-law, who was with us, used to amuse and keep himself exercised by jumping out of the front coach, letting the whole train pass him by, and then running after it and jumping into the last coach at the back. Nor was the rolling stock kept in good repair. There was actually tall green grass growing in the beds of some of the sleeping compartments. In point of fact, we were lucky and the engine only ran off the line once when we were aboard. That was on the way back. The bump that caused it did not seem any bigger than usual. However, the train stopped and, on getting out, we discovered the engine standing off the line at a considerable angle to the coaches. My sister-in-law and I, needing exercise, decided to go for a walk up the track, supposing that it was safe to allow a good two hours for getting the thing started again. However, we had not been walking a couple of miles before the train came puffing along after us. It was nearly dark, but we shouted and waved to the engine driver, and he stopped to let us get in.

Peace River Crossing is—or was twelve years ago—a tiny little town, but an important one; since, except if one went due south, when one could find big towns within three hundred and fifty miles or less, it was the only town within a radius of some thousands of miles. Indeed, if one went north there was nothing so large as itself between it and the Pole. It is, in fact, the metropolis of the whole Peace River district. It had in 1919 a population of about two thousand people and consisted of a fair-sized group of little wooden houses and a great many prospective avenues laid out and labelled to show where roads and houses would in future be. The peculiar thing about the wooden houses was that they seemed to be movable. Whilst we were there, the ex-Baptist Chapel, which had been sold to some other de-

nomination, was being slowly hauled down the main street to its new abode.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since the over-feminised women whom one meets with in all the luxury centres of the world are as artificially produced for their market as early asparagus or *pâté de foie gras*—are in fact as exotic a luxury as the furs and jewels with which they are enwrapped—one would expect that the further out one moved from the centres of civilisation the more practical and the less conventionally feminine would the dress and demeanour of women become. But up to a point this is not so. In Peace River Crossing, for example, the women walked through the muddy roads and along the rickety half-made side-walks in the highest of pin-pointed heels, in the most exaggerated if not quite the latest of fashionable clothes, and round their bepowdered necks hung big pearl necklaces. Natural enough if one comes to think of it. It is simply a question of demand. Many of the men who come into Peace River Crossing have not had a glimpse of a woman for weeks, or even months. They are hungry for the sight of one, and they are craving for all the outward and visible signs which habit and tradition have taught them to associate with the very essence of femininity. So the women give them pearls, powder and pin heels. It looks oddly incongruous in that queer little outpost of city life. Peace River is, it is true, the last outpost to which the pin heels and the powder reach. Further out the thing is reversed and one sees what one would expect. You cannot run a farm and six babies in the wilderness on pin heels and powder. The women up and down the river are practical and not dressy. Many wear brown trouser overalls much like the men.

The *D. A. Thomas*, which did the trip downstream from

Peace River Crossing to Vermilion Chutes, was a reasonable sized boat—not a mere motor boat, but a real steamer. (She burnt logs. At intervals during the trip she stopped and they were hurled into her from the banks where they lay waiting.) We each had a cabin to ourselves. Nor were we by any means the only passengers. We suffered on her, however, from bites that itched very badly. Mosquitoes, we supposed—though it did seem odd that a mosquito should bite one round the waist during the night—till one day John woke up having squashed one: a round, flat bug. The ship's company were most indignant and said we must have brought them on with us ourselves.

Every afternoon we used to play bridge in the lounge with the ship's cook—Northern Canada is a democratic place. Naturally, in a country where you may trek for hundreds of miles without catching sight of a man, human beings become very precious things. And because people are precious to each other, no one can afford to invent social conventions by which each person does not know every other one, and so cuts himself off perhaps from two treasures out of six.

It might help us to carry out the injunction to "Love one another" if the population were reduced to one per square mile. But the rule does not always hold. Put two men into a farm together. Leave them there for six months at a time without letting them see another soul, and it is quite possible that by the end of the six months one will have murdered the other out of sheer nervous irritation. They had a story on the *Lady Mackworth* of two men to whom this had happened. One man had got on the nerves of the other to the point when he just killed him. The reason, so their neighbours said, was that the murdered man had red hair. But let no one suppose that the Peace River district

is an easy part of the world in which to make a good getaway after a murder. A country in which everyone knows of, and is interested (with all the hunger of the lonely) in every neighbour within six hundred square miles has grave disadvantages from the murderer's point of view. The man who murdered his partner was tracked, so they told us, for two years by the North-West Mounted Police. Always they got closer and closer. At last, when they were almost upon him, he threw himself into the river.

Married couples manage better (though the lunacy rate amongst farmers' wives in the lonely districts is abnormally high), partly because families come, partly, perhaps, because the lubrication of sex tends to do away with much of the intense irritation which living month after month alone together can generate.

The third day down the river we saw a married couple set out to make a home in the wilderness. The boat stopped and landed on to the beach a young married couple with a baby of eighteen months dressed in a smart pink cotton frock, and some boxes containing goods and chattels. That was all. There was no house, no hut, no clearing in the woods, nothing. We were told their story. They came from Manchester. They had married during the war and, owing to the housing shortage, they had had to make their home with his people. She had got on badly with her in-laws, and they had decided to clear out to Canada. As an ex-soldier, he had been granted some land. This was the land. They were forty miles away through uncleared woods and marsh land (no roads) from their nearest neighbour. They might as well have been a thousand for all the use it was to them. It was already September. The *D. A. Thomas* was making her last trip down the river. No boat would pass that way until the following summer. Before the heavy

frosts came they would have to put up some shelter sufficient to save them from being frozen to death. They had enough tinned foods with them to keep them alive during the winter. Fresh food of any kind would be out of the question till the summer came. It seemed a pretty high price to pay for not hitting it off with one's in-laws. As we moved off, the baby, in its best new frock, was gurgling and throwing stones about the beach, but the mother was weeping.

A couple of days later we stopped at the farm of the man who was known in those parts as the King of the North. He was a big and successful farmer. His wife had been a missionary before they married. (There were quite a few missionaries of all denominations up there. They told us that the Roman Catholics did the best.) They were a most interesting couple, and their house was, I imagine, the centre of culture for some hundreds of square miles around. They had a fair-sized library, mostly of mid-Victorian books, which had evidently been read again and again. They had a family of twelve children, and amongst their forest of farm buildings stood a little school-house. It had an odd history. It seemed that they started by sending the eldest of the twelve children to school in Winnipeg, but it took her almost a fortnight each way to get to and from school, and one way and another she was often held up. They could not face the thought of making such complicated arrangements for the whole dozen. By the laws of Alberta, any district that can produce eight children has the right to have a State school built for it and a State-paid teacher provided, and they had twelve. They applied for a school to be built and a teacher to be sent. The school was duly built for them—the one we saw amongst the outhouses—and a teacher appointed. But at the last moment the teacher's heart failed her, and when the

boat which should have brought her came down the river there was no teacher on board. Another was appointed and a third, and the same thing happened. They were beginning to get a shade discouraged when the wife had a brilliant idea. In her missionary days before her marriage she had taught, and she was a duly certified teacher. The King of the North wrote off to the Alberta authorities that if they would provide the salary he could provide the teacher. And so, paid by the Alberta educational authorities, the mother settled down in the school-house to teach her twelve children.

Vermilion itself was a dull group of shanties lying in ugly, flat country. Its few inhabitants were partly traders, partly missionaries and partly mouldy-looking Indians. It lies at an important junction, and perhaps one day it will be one of the great towns of the world, but when we saw it, it had little to recommend it.

\* \* \* \* \*

The little boat that went fortnightly up river to Hudson's Hope, and took some five days on the trip, was a very small one. But Mr. L——, knowing we were all used to the luxuries and refinements of civilisation, made the most prodigious efforts to arrange for our comfort. A barge had been attached to the side of the boat expressly to serve as a bedroom for the ladies of the party (there were six of us), who would otherwise have had to sleep with the men on the dining-room floor. What is more, six bunks with real mattresses had been installed in the barge and an awning put over it. It really was perfectly comfortable, except that allowance had not been made for the effect of the wash caused by the speed of the boat, so that whenever the *Lady Mackworth* went too quickly or breasted a very fast current a large wave swept over the barge and soaked all the beds.

The men, as I have said, all slept together on the dining-

room floor, and very crowded they were too. One night my husband, feeling cold, threw out a hand in the dark, and grasping what he supposed to be a fur rug tried to draw it over him. But it was not a fur rug; it was the cook's head of hair!

It was a pleasant but monotonous five days. The *Lady Mackworth* fussed her busy little way in the sunlight, up the cold, deep, swift-running river ("You don't," they said, "often get out of the Peace River alive when you once fall in") with never a soul in sight—not so much as an animal, except once a bear seen through glasses on the distant hillside—day after day, day after day. Low hills closed in our view on each side of the river.

The person who tended to pervade that boat was an acquaintance of Mr. L——'s, of whom we had never heard before and whose name I have now—perhaps luckily—forgotten. He was one of the most perfectly picturesque people I have ever seen—more like a cinema hero to look at than a real live man. He usually dressed in white (which, what with the washing arrangements, which didn't really exist, must have been difficult). He was tall and slim. His skin was a perfect tan, his eyes just the right blue; he wore broad, cowboy-looking hats. He was continually strolling about on the outside of the boat railings and stepping from the boat to the barge. The more good-natured amongst us looked duly impressed.

This gentleman's motive for joining the trip was transparent. He had acquired some coal measures in the lower Rockies some sixty miles up river from Hudson's Hope, and he desired to sell those coal measures to us at a handsome profit. Now, it seems possible that the coal was there in the quantities he said it was (coal up



there, there certainly was), and quite possible even that it was all that he declared it to be in quality. What is certain is that Peace River Crossing was its only possible market, and that by the time that coal had been carried sixty miles by pathless woods and river to Hudson's Hope and then taken five hundred miles by boat to Peace River Crossing, it would have been worth its weight in rubies. These considerations, however, did not weigh with the Cinema Beauty. His one desire was to get me to go and look at his coal measures; he felt certain that once seen they would prove irresistible. The *Lady Mackworth* only stopped for five days at Hudson's Hope before making her return journey. And five days was only just time to go and see the coal and get back to her before she started down. But the trip sounded rather an amusing one, so finally I told him that nothing in this world would induce me to buy a coal measure five hundred miles from nowhere in a country not likely to be immediately developed; but that if, seeing that that was my view, he liked to take me to see the stuff, I would go. He was not in the least discouraged, and so, early the morning after we reached Hudson's Hope, off we started—five of us—the C. B., Mr. L——, my uncle Edric, his young and energetic wife Nellie and myself. That is to say, we assembled early for the start. But there seemed to be uncommonly little power of organisation either in the C. B. or in Mr. L——. We waited for three hours or more whilst they fussed about making more and more preparations, and letting one horse loose whilst they loaded the next. The Cinema Beauty was beautifully attired. He had on spotless white duck trousers (just a little tight), a dark brown khaki shirt open at the neck, and a wide-brimmed panama hat. The whole costume set off his figure and his handsome bronzed face and blue eyes to perfection. It did

half strike me at the time, however, that white duck trousers for a trip into the wilds when one could not afford to carry a spare pair were perhaps a mistake. They were. At lunch that very first day he sat down on the strawberry jam tin, and they never looked the same after that.

We began our trip on horses. The path lay through woods, those endless depressing woods of Northern Canada, whose effect of gloom is created by the dead trees which all lie for ever where they have fallen, some right on the ground, others partly propped up by other trees. Every now and then one comes on patches where one of the numerous forest fires has burnt itself out and the dead trees stand and lean and fall about at all angles like grey-white ghosts. The road we travelled had been made by chopping down a sufficient number of trees to let a couple of horses through abreast, but it had not been considered necessary to uproot them. Their sharp, jagged little stumps (the trees just there were for the most part not much thicker than a man's arm) dotted the path our horses had to tread. Every now and again a sapling that had been missed out when they cut the others down stood up in the middle of the path, and if it was much in the way someone jumped off and cut it down to let us pass. Doubtless the horses understood this kind of road, and were perfectly safe. But I kept on picturing my horse bringing the soft pad of his hoof down on to the jagged stump of a little tree and coming down with a thud, and had a thoroughly uncomfortable ride.

That night we camped outside a farmhouse and ate our evening meal at the farm. The farmer and his wife were Swedes, nice people, and just the right type for that part of the world. The woman told us that when she had her first baby there was no one in the house at all. Her husband was away working on the other side of the river. When he

came home in the evening the baby was there. She looked the capable kind that can deal with an emergency. We had brought quite a bit of paraphernalia with us on pack-horses. Nellie and I slept in a tent that night and the next. At first I found myself with a distaste for eating the whole of each meal off a black, pock-marked-looking plate from which every vestige of enamel had long ago been chipped. But that wore off after the first meal. The second day, much to my relief, we discarded the horses, all except two pack-horses, which accompanied us as far as the river which we now had to cross. The grey hills with their tops shaved off as flat as tables, and here and there great masses of red and gold autumn-leaved Canadian blueberry bushes up their sides, were beautiful. We lunched at a gold-digger's camp by the river-side. There is gold in the upper reaches of the Peace (not very much, I fancy), and these people were busy extracting it from the sand. It was interesting to watch.

Then we crossed the river. We crossed in a canoe made out of the hollowed-out trunk of a birch tree, and it was not too easy a business. For one thing, the Cinema Beauty and the man who owned the canoe held opposite views as to how it should be steered and what was the best landing-place. And although the owner won in the end, it was only after a sharp tussle in mid-stream, with the current running strong and the boat floating down it whilst they argued. The Peace is not an easy river to negotiate, and the landing certainly did present some difficulties.

The Cinema Beauty had been getting more and more sulky and overbearing and bad-tempered ever since the start. He had never really recovered, I think, from the strawberry jam tin. And to anyone who tried to placate him (as did each of the others in turn—goodness knows

why) he was actively rude. He had all the attributes of the badly spoiled child.

We landed, on the other side of the river, on Carbon River Jones's property. Carbon River Jones, so called because his land lay just where the Carbon River (which is a mountain stream rather than a river—at least, it is in the autumn) runs into the Peace, was a trapper, and an uncommonly interesting man. By birth he was an American. His father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather had each settled on the very edge of civilisation as it moved further and further west from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But when it came to Carbon River Jones's turn the Pacific had been reached. The United States had become a tame and civilised country. Carbon River Jones shook its dust off his feet and migrated to the northern Rockies. There he trapped and prospected and hunted and shot, till the war came. When war broke out (he was then a man nearing fifty) he was away on a trip some hundreds of miles from the nearest white village. But the news travelled quickly all the same; the Indians brought it. "King George, he fight," they said. Carbon River Jones trekked six hundred miles to the nearest recruiting centre and enlisted. He served through the war. And at the end of the war he went straight back to his old life. But the war had made a difference; he had got the habit of living with other people. So when he came back he brought with him a wife. She was many years younger than he was. She had been brought up in the outskirts of Folkestone. She came straight from there to the Carbon River.

Carbon River Jones felt that some special effort was due to her. He built an extra room on to his one-roomed hut, kept a couple of skins of the bears he trapped and laid them on the floor. He bought a terrier to keep her company

when he went off on his trapping rounds, and she was left alone in the hut for days at a time with bears nosing round her front door. The marriage appeared to be completely happy. But I could not help suspecting that she must miss Folkestone a good deal. She received us in a beautifully laundered white embroidered blue linen frock such as she might have worn on Folkestone Pier. We had not seen a woman in anything but khaki overalls since we left Peace River Crossing. That night we pitched our tent in Carbon River Jones's garden, and next day when we started up the Carbon River (so called because of the outcrops of coal to be found alongside it) he came with us to show us the way. It was lucky he did. There had been a path through the woods made by the Indians before the war, so they told us, but the Indians had not used it for five or six years, and so far as the untutored eye could see, no vestige of the track remained after the first few miles.

We got up early that morning and went down to wash in the icy Peace River. Our tent and all extra belongings were left behind. Nellie and I only carried an extra sweater or so in our knapsacks. The men carried blankets for the night, for us as well as for themselves. At first the path led amongst the stones of the flat river bed which the Carbon uses when it floods in spring. We walked amongst masses of waist- and shoulder-high balsam poplar seedlings. As one walked one could run the branches through one's hand, and when one smelt it afterwards it was like incense. They told us that in spring when the snows first melt and the buds swell and burst the incense scents the whole air—it is something marvellous. It would be worth going up there just to smell it.

But that first easy bit of walking did not last long. Soon we were struggling through moss up to our knees, pushing

through undergrowth, or, worst of all, trying to get across stretches of dead and rotting trees which lay for a mile or more at a time piled in heaps; one foot would strike a piece of wood which still bore one, the next would let one sink into the rotten wood up to the waist. We were told that the actual distance we went that day was not much more than eleven miles. It took us eleven hours.

We stopped for lunch on a cool flat rock by the river. Carbon River Jones had contributed some dried bear's meat steak to our provisions, which was interesting though tough. One of the men caught some arctic trout in the stream with his bare hands, and we cooked them. Also we finished what was left of the strawberry jam. It was a delicious lunch. Then we struggled on. Towards nightfall, when we were only a mile from the coal measures, one of our party collapsed and could go no further. It seemed very foolish to have come so far and never get to the coal measures we had set out to find; so, though a mile seemed, just then, a terribly long way, Carbon River Jones, the Cinema Beauty and I left the others and went on.

That last mile was mostly through deep moss. And then at last we got to the little tributary of the Carbon, in the cliff on the other side of which the coal measures were said to lie exposed. And when we got there the stream, instead of being a tiny dried-up rivulet, as according to all calculations it should have been, was a great brown, foaming, roaring torrent—far more formidable-looking than the Carbon River itself. We stood looking down at it from the edge of our side of the narrow little ravine as it bubbled and roared some twenty feet below us. Carbon River Jones was not in the habit of being done down by any of the tricks the wilderness might play upon him. "That's nothing," he said, "we'll just cut down a sapling and throw it across.

Lady Rhondda can easily walk across on it." Well, of course, I am sure-footed enough, and I knew I could. But it was dusk and I was very tired, and the saplings thereabouts were thin and very full of knobbly branches up the trunks, so that one would have to walk and balance, not sit safely astride and pull oneself over. I have seldom heard of a plan I liked less. Still, it did seem foolish to turn back now; and, moreover, Carbon River Jones was the kind of man whose respect one did not care to forfeit. I replied with all suitable enthusiasm that his idea was an excellent one. To my immense surprise, I was rescued by the Cinema Beauty. He said that he would not hear of my being allowed to risk my life like that. It was quite out of the question. The two men had a heated argument. Carbon River Jones hated being crossed in his plans by the mere whim of the wilderness (I dare say he thought it was unlucky to give in to it). I put in some half-hearted pleas on Carbon River Jones's side. But the Cinema Beauty won. For one thing, the coal was his business, and if he refused to let me go on and see it, it was his own loss and no one else's. For another, he was intensely, urgently, determined that we should not attempt it. I was thankful that he won, but I was much puzzled and entirely ungrateful. I may have been wronging him, but I could not believe for one moment that ever in his life he had turned back from something he really wanted to do because it involved risk to someone else's life. Of course he, like all of us except Jones, was not really in condition, and was pretty nearly dead beat, and he would have had to help with felling the tree and throwing it across—it may be that he had not the grit to make the final effort when he was tired out. Or it may be (and, odd though it seems, that was what I was pretty sure of at the time) that he was frightened for himself. It seems queer,

for he was always balancing about the boat. But there is a lot of difference between mild showing off on a boat, when there is always a rail close by to put a hand down on to, and balancing across a not too steady sapling twenty feet above a rushing river in the dusk when one is dead tired. Anyway, at the time I decided that he funk'd it. I don't know. . . .

There was no question of doing it the next morning. As it was, we had left ourselves with barely time to get back to the boat before she sailed.


We had left the others in a mossy place underneath a group of great towering pines. Their black branches gloomed miles up in the sky above us, their huge red trunks made a living and pillared cathedral of our resting-place. Someone cut down a few saplings and made a great roaring fire; its flames leapt up in sheets, but it was safe enough; the pines were too big and too far above it. We had supper by it. Then they made for Nellie and me beds of delicious-smelling balsam spruce—was that its name? I'm not sure. I only know that it smelt perfect, and that the fact that one was far too tired to sleep was all to the good, since it would have been waste to shut one's eyes for one minute of that lovely night; with the great flames leaping about the pine logs, and the full moon shining in through the big dark trees, it was the most perfect thing in the world.

Next morning at breakfast the Cinema Beauty was particularly sulky. I suppose it was pretty irritating to have had the whole expedition for nothing. The white trousers which had shone so immaculately on the morning of the start scarcely had a white spot left on them by now; but the strawberry jam patch still showed up well at the back, and just above it the trousers had begun to split and a brown tail



of shirt came through. The C. B. stood with his profile to Nellie. Nellie is one of the kindest women I know, but she has a strong sense of the ridiculous which occasionally overcomes her. Something about the profile of this gloomy figure with the brown pheasant's tail coming through the split trousers suddenly tickled her and she collapsed into fits of silent giggles. Mr. L—— followed the line of her eye and collapsed too. In a second we were all silently shaking. The Cinema Beauty stalked away in furious dudgeon. Some ten minutes later, Mr. L—— came round trying to borrow safety-pins from Nellie and me. She lent one and I another before I realised what it was for, or I certainly would not have wasted it on the C. B.'s trousers. But I am not sure that the effect of the little brown pheasant's tail escaping out from between the two safety-pins was not really almost funnier than before.

We got back to Hudson's Hope late on the evening before the *Lady Mackworth* started down the river again. After our trip she seemed like the height of luxury.



●

CHAPTER XIX  
THE FUTURE

“... henceforth my gates are open to real life, bring what it may.”

SOMEWHERE about 1919 I had a queer symbolical dream—it made so much impression on me that I have remembered it. I dreamt that a great grief has just the same effect on a person as if some magic wand should sweep across a corn-field, leaving it standing, looking exactly as it had before but having taken, in that passage, all the grain out of the ears. So, in my dream I thought, a great grief does. Everything looks just the same afterwards as before, but the grain has all gone. There is no kernel, no substance, no reality behind the façade of the usual round of things. I can still see in my dream the great, breast-high, green-golden, heavy-eared corn-field to which this queer witchcraft had happened; I can still see the path across it through which one walked. It was close under some woods that I pictured it, about a mile away from Llanwern.

I set that dream down here because it seems to me an apt enough simile for what happened to the world after the war. Normal life had, apparently, resumed its usual tenor; actually there was no longer any grain in the corn. That was what one felt when, in November 1919, we returned from Canada.

The war was really over at last; but it had left behind it a world of tired-out people, emotionally exhausted, with ragged nerves. It had put its mark on all those who had known it, even from the safe haven of England, so that they would never again be quite the same people they had been before, or, saving its coming, might have been. But it was over.

And it was queer how the minute it was over we just put it straight out of our heads. In a way, though we spoke of it often we did not really think about it again—not, at least, with the sensitive part of our minds. We shut the lid down on it, and pushed it—the real thing, not, of course, the façade we talked about—out of our consciousness—for years afterwards, until Time had grown a skin on our memory of it. How much we did so I realised when one day, some three years after it was over, I went—by myself as it chanced—to see a play by Maeterlinck dealing with a war situation. He had caught the real atmosphere of the thing. It was a revelation, a bringing back of something I had already clean forgotten. After the second act I could bear no more. I got up and fled from the theatre.

But in 1919 we could go forward once more. Things were beginning to move again after the years of paralysis. Time had seemed to stop during the war as if we were just waiting for it to be over. It was as if those four years were a gap between two epochs, a gap in which the hours stood still. Yet we who had gone into the war young came out, as it seemed, middle-aged. Time had not stood still, it had galloped, and in that gallop had robbed us of the last years of our youth.

We found ourselves in an utterly changed world. Across that gulf of chaos whose memory we needed above all else to wash away, the frontiers of 1914 were already dimmed and half forgotten. We could not, even had we wished, join this new comparatively sane world on to the jagged edges of the one that had broken off five years before—this new one was quite a different place. The war had broken down barriers and customs and conventions. It had left us curiously free.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

That was especially true of me. The years, as their habit is, had made more visible the incompatibility between Humphrey and myself with which our marriage had started. We had no children. We decided—as it seems to me wisely—to face our facts and not to drag an uncomfortable life-sentence to its weary end. So, not very long after the return from Canada, we took the necessary steps to have the marriage dissolved.

I was free, free as never yet in my life had I been before. I have always counted freedom among the greatest of all blessings. I had a profession. I was rich. Owing to being my father's daughter I had, almost by accident and much to my own surprise, made a name. A name is a platform. Life was before me to do what I chose with. Already it had been good, but I knew that the best was yet to come.

There are, as it seems to me, two essential primary conditions to be fulfilled if one is to have any chance of achieving the kind of success that really matters in life. First one must find out what one wants to do, and secondly one must insist on doing it. But the first half is every bit as difficult as the second. . . . “Dieu, considérez que nous ne nous entendons pas nous-mêmes et que nous ne savons pas ce que nous voulons, et que nous nous éloignons infiniment de ce que nous désirons,” wrote Saint Theresa of Avila. She was a wise woman. That is a thing which until we have learnt better, and then it is often too late, we most of us do in one way or another. I was very lucky: for me it was not too late.

Business was not—and in my heart I knew it—the thing I was really best fitted for. I had up to a point succeeded

well enough. Situated as I was, I could hardly fail to do that. Any moderately intelligent person, with the extraordinary advantages I had had—both in certain forms of essential training and in having been brought in at the top, and that by a father with an assured position and an unbreakable prestige—was almost bound to do as much. I had succeeded as the usual son succeeds. But business, though it might be my profession, was not my real vocation. I knew very well that I could do other things far better.

If I had been a man I should not, I think, have gone into business at all, except perchance as a second string. I should perhaps have turned to politics, perhaps to the law, perhaps to writing. . . . I should have known from the start that business pure and simple was not my real line. But being a woman I had to grasp at any rope that would help me to climb out of the pit. Business had served its turn as a key to set me free, to give me the status of freedom, and the right of entry into the world of free men. I was indeed lucky in being thrown such a magnificent rope. And I am, I think, perhaps lucky also, in that, having been born a woman, I was not forced to decide what I wanted to do before my mind had ripened to the point when it was ready to choose.

Of course when the war ended I knew that whatever else I did I had to go on also in the business world—I had shouldered that responsibility from my father—I could not drop it. Nor did I want to. I liked the life, I liked the atmosphere, I liked the people I met there. In all the years I have sat upon Boards of Directors I have scarcely ever met there a colleague whom I did not find likeable; and most of them I have found quite especially likeable. I like, as I have said, the breed.

It is not that I like all breeds or all people. Rather to the contrary. I have never done or pretended to do that. I have never even been able to see why the ordinary not-saint should be supposed to attempt such a thing. Surely the theory that we must like everyone is founded on the idea that we are condemning them or wishing them ill if we do not like them. But we are not necessarily doing anything of the sort. We may be merely saying that we do not happen to be so made that we fancy their flavour. We most of us dislike, after all, the flavour of some foods and of many books; must we, then, try to pretend to ourselves that we like the flavour of all people? I, for example, dislike rhubarb and rabbit and the books of X—— and Y—— and Z——. Their flavour does not appeal to me—nor does the flavour of some of the people that I meet. Am I to pretend that it does? I wish them no harm. But just as I avoid eating rabbit or rhubarb, so I avoid, when possible, contact with people whose flavour mislikes me. One's appreciation of people—their inside appearance, I mean, not their outside—is, I think, really an æsthetic thing. The flavour of a beautiful personality appeals, it seems to me, to the same part of one as a good sunset does. I know people who are like apricots, or sunsets over blue mountains, or thyme on banks, or roses, or lilies, or apple blossom, or just good solid bread and cheese, or apple tart. But I know others who—to me—are like rhubarb, or rabbit, or stuffy rooms, or patchouli, or even cesspools. I bear the cesspools no grudge; I appreciate that to other people they may seem as beautiful as orchids—but I avoid them.

But to return to the business world—I liked, as I have said, the life. It is the antithesis of the life I loathe most of all that I have ever met—drawing-room life. I like

the friendly, unfussy atmosphere; the absence of that appalling social convention of talking for talking's sake; the lack of frills. I have always liked office life. Miss E. M. Delafield was once, when I was just recovering from influenza, trying to persuade me to go to an evening party. "If I go to the party," said I, "I shan't feel fit for the office next day." "What matter?" said she. "But I'd much rather feel fit for work than go to a party," I explained. We compared notes. "I'd never want to go to an office if I could go to a party," said she. "And I'd never want to go to a party if I could go to an office," said I. A radical difference.

\* \* \* \* \*

As I looked round the world after the war there was another thing it seemed to me I could not very well drop. I had spent a number of years fighting for equal political freedom for women and men. That at least had been the symbol of our fight, even if its real meaning had lain far deeper than that. And we had not yet got it. I was a little bored at still having to bother with this and other A B C things of the kind when there was so much else of enthralling interest and urgency that one wanted to do in the world, but since we had not even yet got equality, and I knew that it was an essential tool, I could not very well stop short of taking my share in helping to get it. So I made an effort to get into the House of Lords, which, thanks to Lord Hewart, was very nearly successful, but was finally defeated by Lord Birkenhead (an entertaining enough story, but too long for the telling here). It would, after all, if one could get there, be a useful enough platform for all sorts of purposes, quite apart from the value of breaking down that particular barrier.

And I took my share in pressing for the abolition of

various inequalities in the laws. I formed an equality society, the Six Point Group. We joined with such bodies as the National Union of Women Teachers and the Open Door Council, who were doing the same kind of work. We co-operated in the Equal Rights Committee. For seven or eight years we worked away at all these things; at a heap of niggling little laws that needed altering. Finally the Equal Rights Committee tackled the only big purely legal inequality that still existed—the Franchise Acts—and at last, when, in 1928, the vote came on equal terms, one felt free to drop the business.

It was a blessed relief to feel that one had not got to trouble with things of that sort any more. They are essential, of course. They must be done. And I like and respect the women who do them—indeed, the chief attraction of the work to me was that, in the course of doing it, one came across such extraordinarily fine people. Some of the nicest people I have ever known were, and are, doing that work—but it was not really my kind of work: it never had been. I was never really much interested in changing details of laws. I want bigger game than that.

I had loved, it is true, every minute of that militant fight before the war. That had to be done. There are times when to change a law is the quickest—indeed, the only—way to change public opinion. The period of the militant movement had been such a time. But even so that fight of ours was only ostensibly concerned with changing the law. The vote was really a symbol. And the militant fight itself did more to change the status of women—because it did more to alter our own opinion of ourselves—than ever the vote did. In actual fact, in those years we were changing the attitude of a country—nay, of the world; for in that fight



England led the way. The other nations followed after. That was infinitely worth the doing.

I do not mean to suggest that that alteration in point of view which was beginning to take place so quickly in those old pre-war days was—or is—fully accomplished. It is indeed, if one is to be honest, scarcely begun, but its continuation does not lie chiefly among the Blue Books.

Changing, not the laws, but a point of view, that is really worth while. . . . “He who moulds public sentiment,” declared Abraham Lincoln, “goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed.” Alter a nation’s habit of mind, and the laws will alter of themselves. That at least is how I see it. How in my heart I have always seen it. And since I do see it that way I must do what for me is the best thing. I can no other.

\* \* \* \* \*

These two things—business and these odds and ends of inequality—apart, I was free to devote myself to the things I really wanted to do. I had money and freedom and the whole world to choose from. . . .

I did not want to bother with changing laws. What, then, did I want? There was no longer any real difficulty about that. I knew at last what I had to try for. I knew what my training and upbringing—its disadvantages as well as its advantages—and the position I had attained to, best fitted me to do. I might not even yet have put it into very definite words to myself. I have never been of those who can see far ahead a conscious, mapped-out plan of their lives. But in my heart I knew well enough. I knew what I had to give and what I wanted to take from life.

I wanted, as I have said, passionately, urgently, to change customs and to influence ideas. I looked round a post-war

world whose civilisation had just escaped destruction by the skin of its teeth—in that first flush of relief after war had ceased we were really pretty sure it *had* escaped—and whose ideas and customs, unless they were radically changed, mine along with the rest, of course—seemed likely to lead it back towards the same abyss within a short while. If civilisation were to be saved there were all kinds of things that needed thinking out, and that pretty soon. And one was puzzled about them—one did not know. . . . Especially there were those things that had to do with the world as a whole—regarded as a whole. One saw that they were urgent, but they were still very puzzling. I could see that the old ideas had failed us, but what exactly were the new ones that were to save us? How could they be ventilated? It was not so easy, particularly because the surface of things was changing the whole time. One had to accept, try out, reject, as one went along. If only one had to deal with a static instead of a dynamic world, how easy our problems would become! Well, difficulties or no difficulties, I wanted to find, to test, and to spread the customs and the ideas that could be health-giving and life-saving—that more than anything. But how best to do it? Obviously there were a dozen ways of doing it, but which was the best way for me?

\* \* \* \* \*

In the autumn of 1918, when I was still at the Ministry of National Service, and when we all knew that the end of the war was close, Mrs. Chalmers Watson (the founder and first commandant of the Waacs) and I had stopped late in my office one evening, and as we made ready to go we began to discuss what we wanted most to do afterwards. "I want," said I, "to found a paper; that's what I have always wanted." And there and then I sat down on the table by the door

(we had got so far on our way out of the room when the discussion began) and sketched the paper of my dreams. I can still remember some of its qualities. *Time and Tide*\* to-day has many of the features of that paper, but I am bound to admit that, though I have learnt, it seems to me, a life-time's knowledge about weekly reviews since then, is not yet so beautiful as the dream-paper I pictured that evening. Perhaps nothing ever could be. But it seems to me that year by year it grows more like the sketch I made then, as knowledge and the courage and self-confidence and elasticity of method that knowledge breeds make it more easy to translate vision into reality.

I spoke truth that evening. There were two things that all my life I had urgently wanted to do. I had wanted to write and I had wanted to edit a weekly paper. I had always known, of course, that neither of them were ends in themselves, but only the technique by which one would accomplish something else. (One does not write simply for the sake of writing. One writes, or at least the kind of writer I enjoy reading writes, for the sake of something very different from that.) They were only a means to an end, of course, but to me, in themselves, an extraordinarily attractive means. Possibly then, since they drew me so much, they were the best way for me. At least it was worth trying. If that way failed, then I must try again.

There were difficulties about the plan; that I knew from

\* *Time and Tide* was not, of course, founded by me alone. It was founded by a like-minded group of people, all of whom gave to it of their best. Helpers came from far and wide. Any account of that founding and of the people who helped in it would be not the end but the beginning of a book. I will only say here that in point of fact, although I am its editor to-day, it was not I, but my friend Mrs. Helen Archdale, who was its first editor.

the start. In the first place the odds were heavily against making a success of the kind of paper I had in mind. I knew that the people who talked the same language that I did were so small a group that it would be uncommonly difficult at best to do anything more than make a *succès d'estime*. I might fail . . . the thing had, in fact, never yet, in modern times, according to the standard I set myself, succeeded. The public that cares for these things is as yet so small. . . . Even when it had been successful from a prestige point of view, it had not been successful financially. Most weekly reviews lost heavily—that was recognised to be the price they paid for the luxury of getting at the keystone people. That was one difficulty—especially in bad times, and as times got worse it became more serious. One might even, as I very well knew, make a kind of success, and yet . . .

Then again, the thing had never yet been done by a woman. One had to get oneself accepted in a new world. Well, but why not? That part ought to be rather fun. Lastly, there was the difficulty that I knew very little about it. I had almost everything to learn. But that did not worry me very seriously. Indeed, I did not, until I had learnt it, know how much there was to learn. And anyway, supposing one did fail? What then? Life is made up of risks. In my heart I like a gamble. . . . If not that way, then I must try another—but for me that way was the most attractive.

I had first to get the experience. I proceeded to get it. It was an uncommonly expensive and rather painful experience, but at the end of eight or nine years I had gained it.

There was one other drawback. Concentration upon this paper might involve giving up a variety of other things that I had hitherto supposed myself to regard as essential. But

that was not a very serious drawback. There was obviously no point in pretending to myself that I wanted things I did not deeply care for just because they seemed the obvious things. Was I to be so silly as to allow myself to be bluffed into supposing that I either wanted things I did not want or did not want things I did really want just because the people around me happened to see the thing the reverse way to what I did? That is a form of foolishness I have always despised. No two of us have at heart exactly the same needs, and yet we go and allow ourselves to become standardised in these matters, and thereby—quite often—to forgo our own hearts' desires. I had always been quite clear that the common-sense thing for any intelligent person was to cast overboard the unessentials. "‘Take what you want,’ said God. ‘Take it—and pay for it.’" So runs the Spanish proverb. I am a merchant and the daughter of a merchant, and I know that in one coin or another all things worth having must be paid for, and most surely those things which are, we are told, without price. That old Spanish proverb has always seemed to me sense.

As against these drawbacks there was the fact—the all-important fact—that the whole thing fascinated me, not merely the end, but the means too. The chance of reaching out to the people like-minded with oneself, who would understand what one was trying to say. That way I could find the people who were worth hearing, and see that they were heard—heard, if not by the big multitude, at least by the inner group, the keystone people who ultimately directed that multitude. I could put before the public that mattered the things that I wanted them to hear. To the born publicist—and I am that—it had all the advantages of writing without the worry of writing. To edit, not a big circulation daily paper, but a weekly paper, the kind of weekly review I en-

joyed reading, or rather one I had never yet read, but one I wanted to read—the kind of paper that would go to the people who talked the same language that I did myself, that was pure joy.

It was enthralling work thinking it out, finding the people one believed in, getting hold of them to write for one's paper, gradually, slowly, making the thing come alive. Ever since the *New Statesman* days of 1913 I had wanted to edit a weekly review. At last I had my chance. I should indeed have been a fool to stop short. There is nothing in this world to compare with the joy of finding something to do that one believes to be absolutely worth while, and doing it.

Life was very good.



# *New Macmillan Books*



## THE LIFE OF JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

By J. L. GARVIN. With Illustrations. 8vo.

Vol. I. 1836-1885. 21s. net.

Vol. II. 1885-1895. 21s. net.

## EGYPT SINCE CROMER

By LORD LLOYD OF DOLOBRAN, G.C.S.I., formerly High Commissioner for Egypt and the Sudan.

Vol. I. From 1904 to 1919. 8vo. 21s. net.

## PRE-WAR, 1904-1914

A Volume of Reminiscences. By EARL WINTERTON, M.P. 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

## ESSAYS IN BIOGRAPHY

By JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES, C.B. Illustrated. Ex. cr. 8vo.

## ESSAYS IN PERSUASION

By JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES, C.B. Cheaper Edition. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

## CONSERVATISM IN ENGLAND

An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey. By Prof. F. J. C. HEARNshaw, LL.D. 8vo. 8s. 6d. net.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF THE BRITISH DOMINIONS

By Prof. A. BERRIEDALE KEITH, D.C.L., D.Litt. 8vo. 18s. net.

## ON ANCIENT CENTRAL-ASIAN TRACKS

By Sir AUREL STEIN. With Illustrations. 8vo. 31s. 6d. net.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON



# Recent Biographies



## THE LIFE OF MARY KINGSLEY

By STEPHEN GWYNN. With Illustrations. 8vo. 12s. 6d. net.

"This utterly fascinating book gives us the story of the woman as well as her work. . . . Her humour, her amazing courage, her common-sense, her utter lack of conceit, are displayed in her letters, in anecdotes of her, in tales of her childhood, in her final and generous sacrifice."

*Miss Clemence Dane in "The Book Society News."*

## WAR MEMORIES

By PRINCESS MARIE DE CROÿ. With Illustrations. Extra crown 8vo. 8s. 6d. net.

## SIR JAMES GUTHRIE, P.R.S.A.

A Biography by Sir JAMES L. CAW. With a Foreword by Sir D. Y. CAMERON, R.A. With reproductions in photogravure of 46 pictures by Sir JAMES GUTHRIE, and other illustrations. Limited to 485 copies. Imp. 4to. £5 5s. net.

## MEMOIRS OF AN ARCHITECT

By Sir REGINALD BLOMFIELD, R.A. With Illustrations. 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

## BIOGRAPHICAL FRAGMENTS

By Sir ARTHUR SCHUSTER, F.R.S. With Illustrations. 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

## FORTY YEARS OF UPPINGHAM: Memories and Sketches

By JOHN P. GRAHAM. Illustrated. Cr. 8vo. 6s. net.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON





## AIDE-de-CAMP'S LIBRARY

---

*Accn. No... .*

1. Books may be retained for a period not exceeding fifteen days.